

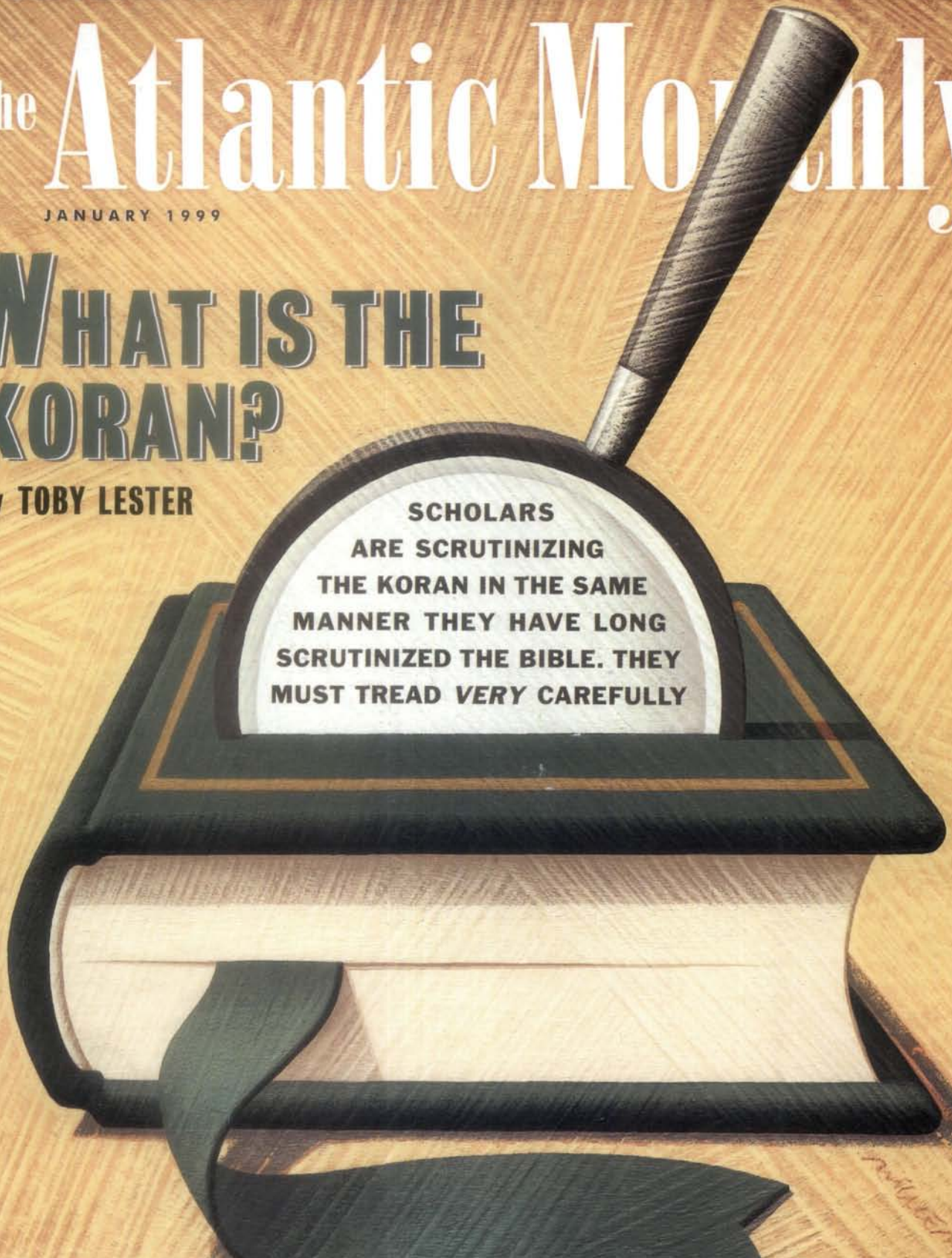
NICHOLAS LEMANN ON THE CELEBRITY CULTURE

The Atlantic Monthly

JANUARY 1999

WHAT IS THE KORAN?

by TOBY LESTER



SCHOLARS
ARE SCRUTINIZING
THE KORAN IN THE SAME
MANNER THEY HAVE LONG
SCRUTINIZED THE BIBLE. THEY
MUST TREAD VERY CAREFULLY

FBXBBDGG****CAR-RT SORT**C003
UNZ0555B096 1#302604 4B

CON K UNZ
555 BRYANT ST 371
PALO ALTO CA 94301-1704
JAN 00
BALA
#0726
395525 3

VERSUS AFRICAN-AMERICANS

● WHEN EVIL IS "COOL"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



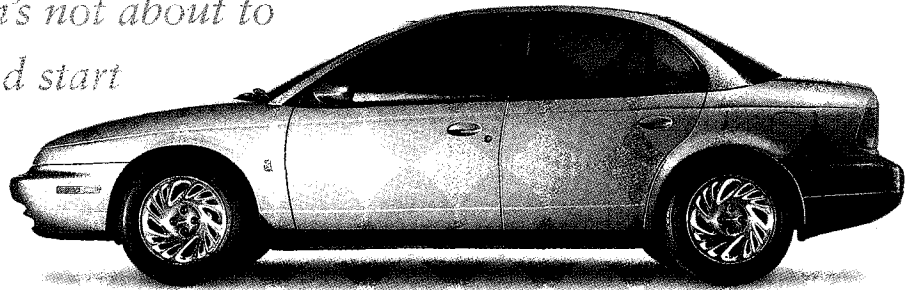
PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The true story of Sam Foster and his remarkable calculations.

Sam Foster is what you might call an avid runner. Last year he logged over a thousand miles on his feet.

He's also what you might call an avid driver, logging 14,000 miles on his Saturn. All of which got Sam to wondering, which cost more to run, Sam or his Saturn? So he dutifully sat down and calculated his annual cost for things like shoes, shorts, knee braces and socks. Then he calculated his annual cost for gas, insurance, his lease and maintenance. The results? It cost Sam thirty-four cents a mile to run, and only thirty-three cents a mile to drive.

Now, Sam's not about to give up running and start driving more, but he was rather pleased to find



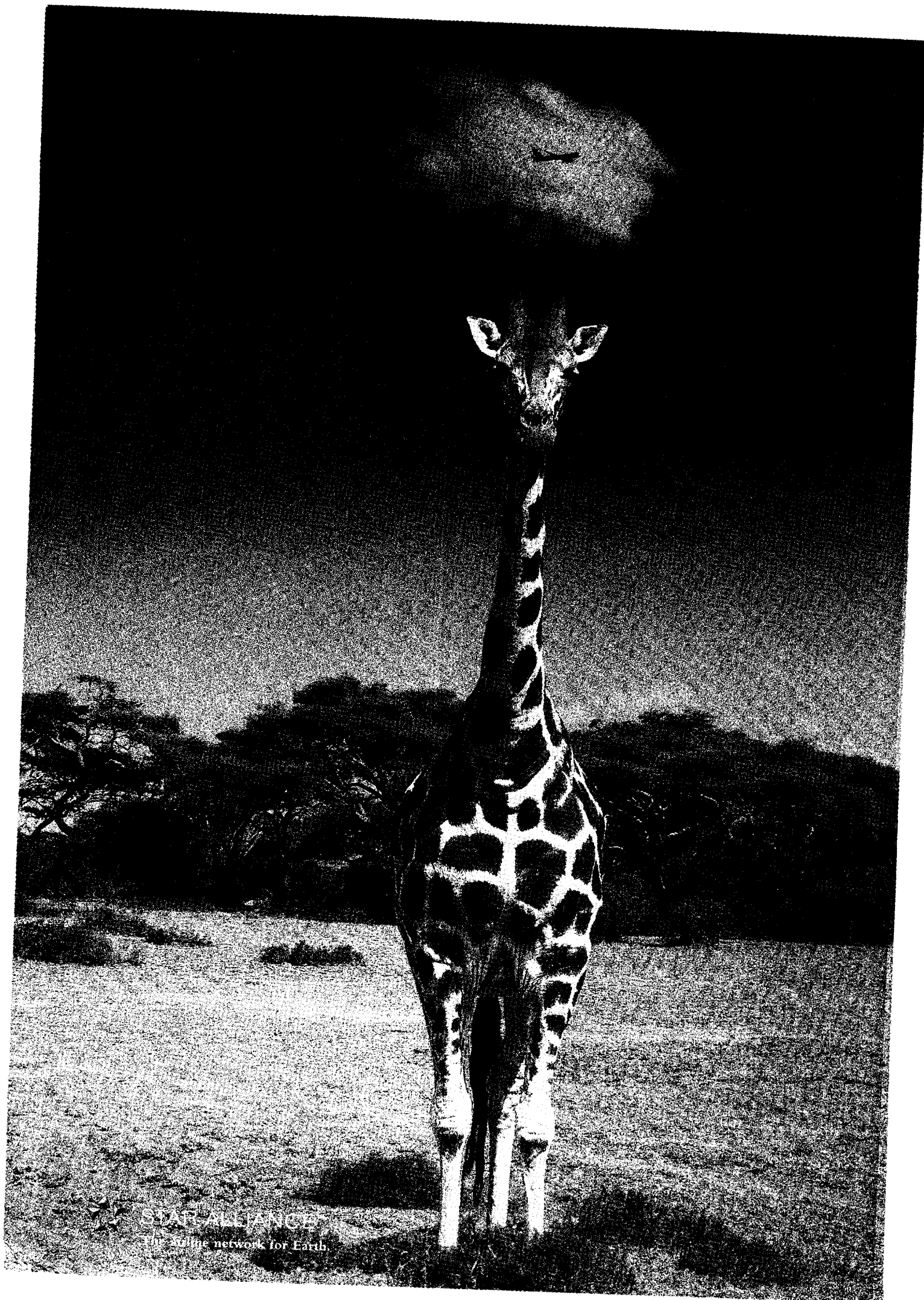
that Saturns are designed to be so inexpensive to own. From color-coded dipsticks for easy do-it-yourself maintenance, to the dent-resistant bodyside panels (think about it, no dents, no dings, fewer repairs), to the highly efficient Saturn engine, which runs superbly on 87 octane and therefore probably the least expensive gas you can find, everything about owning, maintaining, even buying or leasing a Saturn is meant to try and save you as much money as possible.

Which is a good thing. Seriously, have you priced a good pair of running shoes lately? Whew.

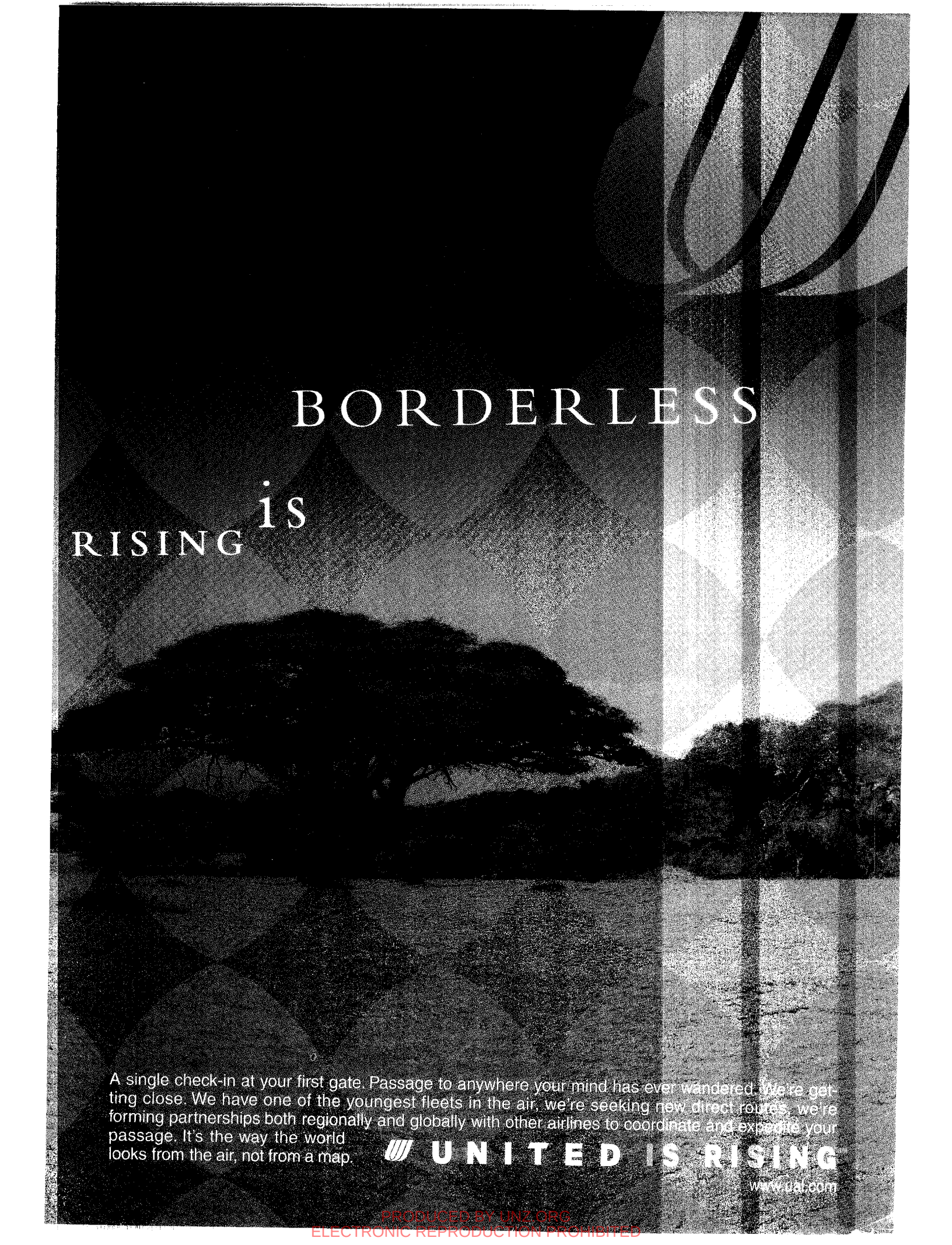
A DIFFERENT KIND of COMPANY. A DIFFERENT KIND of CAR.

The 1999 Saturn SL2 comes with an M.S.R.P. of \$13,195, including AC, retailer prep and transportation. Of course, options, tax and license are extra. We'd be happy to provide more information at 1-800-522-5000, or visit us on the Internet at www.saturn.com. ©1998 Saturn Corporation.





STAR ALLIANCE
The online network for Earth



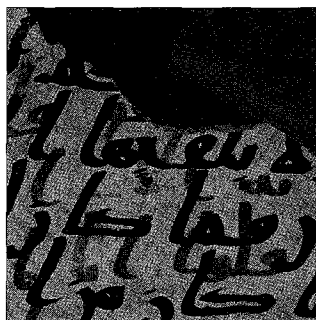
BORDERLESS

is
RISING

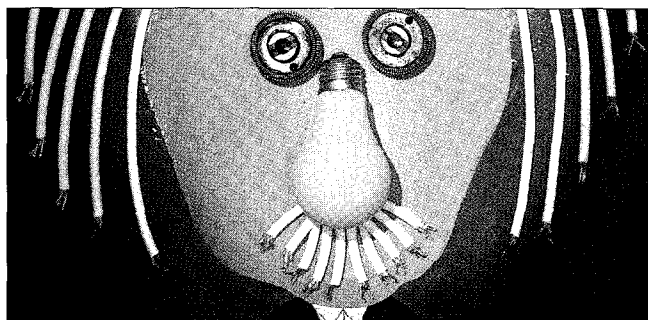
A single check-in at your first gate. Passage to anywhere your mind has ever wandered. We're getting close. We have one of the youngest fleets in the air, we're seeking new direct routes, we're forming partnerships both regionally and globally with other airlines to coordinate and expedite your passage. It's the way the world looks from the air, not from a map.

 **UNITED IS RISING**

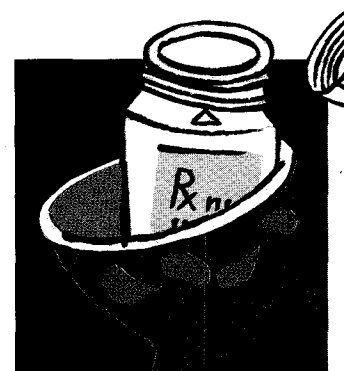
www.ual.com



Page 43



Page 88



Page 26

REPORTS

14 Notes & Comment: Technology Versus African-Americans

From the era of slavery through the computer age, the author argues, the story for America's black community has been "one negative encounter after another."

by Anthony Walton

26 Foreign Affairs: Dead Souls

The health of the Russian people is far worse than outsiders have realized.

by Murray Feshbach

28 Americana: Going All Out for Chinese

In the vast Sino-suburbia of California's San Gabriel Valley are restaurants that offer the best Chinese food outside China.

by Benjamin and
Christina Schwarz

43 What Is the Koran?

Most Muslims believe it to be the literal and unchanging Word of God. But Islam's holiest text has become the subject of new historical scrutiny, a process calling to mind the revolutionary critique of the Bible that began in the nineteenth century. It has been a theologically and politically delicate endeavor—though in the minds of some critics not delicate enough.

by Toby Lester

58 The Liquid Earth

If asked to name America's deadliest and costliest form of natural disaster, many people would come up last with the disaster that should come up first: the landslide.

by Brenda Bell

73 When Evil Is "Cool"

In both the commercial milieu of popular culture and the serious precincts of higher criticism, the author warns, we must guard against the tendency to see evil as mere "transgression," or even as a kind of greatness.

by Roger Shattuck



the Face of Physics, edited by
John Stachel

by Alan Lightman

97 Lost in Post-Reality

*Life the Movie: How
Entertainment Conquered
Reality*, by Neal Gabler

by Nicholas Lemann

101 Brief Reviews

by Phoebe-Lou Adams

ARTS & LEISURE

36 Travel: Senses of Place

Eight *Atlantic* contributors evoke some favorite places associated with special books and writers.

OTHER DEPARTMENTS

6 77 North Washington Street/Contributors

8 Letters

12 The January Almanac

103 The Puzzler

by Emily Cox and
Henry Rathvon

104 Word Court

by Barbara Wallraff

Cover art by Adam Niklewicz

HUMOR, FICTION, & POETRY

57 Fan Letters

A poetry anthology
by Dana Stevens,
Susan Donnelly, and
Mary Jo Salter

75 Plea for Forgiveness

A poem
by Rodney Jones

79 The Next Best Kiss

A short story
by Carol Shields

81 "He Would Never Use One Word Where None Would Do"

A poem
by Philip Levine

87 Security Blanket

A drawing
by Guy Billout

BOOKS

88 A Cataclysm of Thought

*Einstein's Miraculous Year:
Five Papers That Changed*

Wide-eyed. Wet behind the ears. Innocent to the ways of the world.
Those consultants fresh out of school sure are cute.



Our consultants average 13.5 years of experience. Not that there's anything
wrong with learning on the job. Just as long as it's not on your job.

©1998 by KPMG Peat Marwick LLP, the U.S. member firm of KPMG International.

KPMG

It's time for clarity.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

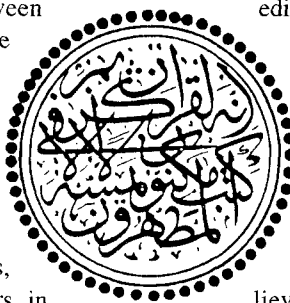


77 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET

TOBY Lester, the author of this month's cover story, "What Is the Koran?," about historical scholarship and Islam, has for a decade cultivated a deep interest in the Islamic world. He speaks Arabic. From 1992 to 1994 he served in the West Bank as a refugee-affairs officer for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, monitoring Intifada-related activity and, when possible, mediating confrontations between the Israeli army and Palestinians. Before that he served as a Peace Corps desk officer, a career that began in 1988 with two years as a volunteer in the Yemen Arab Republic.

"When I first went to Yemen," Lester says, "I was immediately struck by how often the Koran was used in daily life. It was quoted and referred to everywhere: in classrooms, at meals, in the media, on dashboards and bumper stickers, in shops, in government offices, on airplanes, in social gatherings. No text in Western culture exerts anything like the influence the Koran exerts on Islamic culture." It is remarkable, Lester adds, "that at least some study of the Koran isn't a mandatory part of higher education in America."

Islam was certainly not part of Lester's higher education (at the University of Virginia, from which he graduated in 1987).



Nor was journalism much on his mind at the time. Lester came to *The Atlantic Monthly*, in 1995, more or less at his own invitation: he volunteered to work as an unpaid intern in order to learn the business. Lester's natural talents quickly became obvious, and he was hired as a staff member. He now both writes and edits articles for the magazine, and he is the executive editor of the magazine's Web site, Atlantic Unbound.

His article "Secondhand Music" (April, 1997), exploring the emotional resonance of background noise, was recently given a different form on the National Public Radio program *This American Life*. "New-Alphabet Disease" (July, 1997) concerned language politics in Azerbaijan.

Lester offers a quick assessment of the issues that animate his cover story: "Most Muslims believe that every word in the Koran is the Word of God, but I found myself wondering if there weren't some scholars interested in critically examining the Koran and Islamic history. The very idea of such scholarship is troubling to many Muslims. But the fact is that yes, both non-Muslim and Muslim scholars have in recent years been quietly asking probing questions. This article is a survey of some of that work." —THE EDITORS

CONTRIBUTORS

Brenda Bell ("The Liquid Earth") has written for the *Los Angeles Times Magazine* and *Utne Reader*. She is at work on a historical novel set in the Southwest.

Susan Donnelly ("Harpo") is a poet whose work has appeared in *The Norton Introduction to Poetry*. Her book *Eve Names the Animals* (1985) was awarded the Samuel French Morse Poetry Prize by Northeastern University.

Murray Feshbach ("Dead Souls") is a research professor at Georgetown University and the editor in chief of *Environmental and Health Atlas of Russia* (1995).

Rodney Jones ("Plea for Forgiveness") is the author of six poetry collections. His poem in this issue will appear in his book *Elegy for the Southern Drawl*, to be published this spring.

Nicholas Lemann ("Lost in Post-Reality") is the national correspondent of *The Atlantic*.

Toby Lester ("What Is the Koran?") is the executive editor of Atlantic Unbound, the *Atlantic Monthly* Web site.

Philip Levine ("He Would Never Use One Word Where None Would Do") was awarded the 1995 Pulitzer Prize for poetry for his collection *The Simple Truth*. His poem in this issue will appear in his book *The Mercy*, to be published this spring.

Alan Lightman ("A Cataclysm of Thought") is the John E. Burchard Professor of Science and Writing and a senior lecturer in physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His books include the novel *Einstein's Dreams* (1993) and a collection of short stories, *Dance for Two* (1996).

Adam Niklewicz (cover art) is a painter whose work has been widely exhibited. It has appeared on the covers of *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *Business Week*, and on more than a hundred book jackets.

Mary Jo Salter ("Video Blues") is the author of three books of poems. Her fourth collection, *A Kiss in Space*, will be published this spring.

Benjamin Schwarz ("Going All Out for Chinese") is a correspondent for *The Atlantic* and a book critic for the *Los Angeles Times*. **Christina Schwarz** has just completed her first novel.

Roger Shattuck ("When Evil Is 'Cool'") is the author of *Marcel Proust* (1974), which won the National Book Award. His most recent book is *Forbidden Knowledge: From Prometheus to Pornography* (1996).

Carol Shields ("The Next Best Kiss") is the chancellor of the University of Winnipeg. Her book *The Stone Diaries* won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1995. Shields's most recent novel is *Larry's Party* (1997).

Dana Stevens ("Fall") is a Ph.D. candidate in comparative literature at the University of California at Berkeley.

Anthony Walton ("Technology Versus African-Americans") is a writer in residence at Bowdoin College and the author of *Mississippi: An American Journey* (1996). He won a 1998 Whiting Writer's Award.

Go from the dance floor
to the trading floor in your pajamas.



NETSCAPE®



From music to finance, to just about anything else. Netscape® Netcenter™ is one place on the Internet where all your interests come together, just the way you like them. Where you get all the tools you need to do all the things you want online.



Watching a hot stock? Put your portfolio front and center on your **customized My Netscape** page. From news to sports to weather, you'll always get what you want, when you want, the way you want it.



Of course, sometimes you'll want to head out into unexplored territory, so at Netcenter we've also got six different **search engines** to make sure you always find what you're looking for.



There's also our free **WebMail** e-mail service, so it's easy to connect with anyone, from Peoria to Phnom Penh. Basically, the world comes to you. And isn't that what the Internet is supposed to be all about?

netscape.com

The world is coming to you.



Editor

WILLIAM WHITWORTH

Managing Editor

CULLEN MURPHY

Senior Editors

JACK BEATTY, C. MICHAEL CURTIS,
CORBY KUMMER, BARBARA WALLRAFF

Art Director

ROBIN GILMORE-BARNES
JUDY GARLAN (on leave)

National Correspondent

NICHOLAS LEMANN

Assistant Managing Editor

MARTHA SPAULDING

Associate Editors

PETER DAVISON (poetry), AMY MEEKER, SUE PARILLA

Staff Writer

PHOEBE-LOU ADAMS

Staff Editors

DAVID BARBER, CHRIS BERDIK, LESLIE CAULDWELL,
AVRIL CORNEL, KATHRYN FRAUNFELDER,
KATHERINE GUCKENBERGER, HILARY MCCLELLAN,
LUCIE PRINZ, ALLAN REEDER, YVONNE ROLZHAUSEN

Art Staff

ELIZABETH URRICO, Associate Art Director
GILLIAN KAHN, Art Assistant
GABRIELA HERNANDEZ, Designer

New-Media Staff

KATIE BACON, KATIE BOLICK, MICHELLE LANDER,
TOBY LESTER, ROB ROESLER, WEN STEPHENSON,
SAGE STOSSEL, ERIC WESTBY, CANDICE WHITE

Editorial Administration

ELIZABETH BUSCH, HILLARY DRESSER,
JOHN HOLKEBOER, MICHAEL KUBIT,
ROBERT MOELLER, MURIEL MONTEIRO

Correspondents

STEPHEN BUDIAUSKY, ROBERT D. KAPLAN,
WILLIAM LANGEWIESCHE, CHARLES C. MANN,
ERIC SCHLOSSER, BENJAMIN SCHWARZ,
ELLEN RUPPEL SHELL

Contributing Editors

ROY BLOUNT JR., FRANCIS DAVIS,
GREGG EASTERBROOK, JAMES FALLOWS,
SEYMOUR M. HERSH, WENDY KAMINER,
TRACY KIDDER, JAMES ALAN MCPHERSON,
JACK MILES, CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN,
THOMAS POWERS, WILLIAM SCHNEIDER

Submissions & Correspondence

The Atlantic Monthly considers unsolicited
manuscripts, fiction or nonfiction, and
mail for the Letters column.

Correspondence should be sent to

The Atlantic Monthly
77 North Washington Street
Boston, MA 02114

Letters can also be sent via
the Internet to our E-mail address:
Letters@TheAtlantic.com

Manuscripts will not be returned,
nor will queries be answered, unless they are
accompanied by a postage-paid return
envelope of sufficient size. Please do not send
manuscripts by E-mail.

LETTERS

Unwanted Sex

Stephen Schulhofer, in "Unwanted Sex" (October *Atlantic*), says, "The best available estimates suggest that each year . . . thousands (probably hundreds of thousands) of college women face unwanted sexual demands from their professors." There is a deal of difference between "thousands" and "hundreds of thousands." Might I suggest that instead of "best available estimates," which implies some attempt at precision, he should have written "wild guesses"?

The higher number, which suggests that at least 200,000 college students each and every year have sex *demanded* of them by their professors, is a grotesque distortion and a slander on all the hundreds of thousands of male teachers who have never done any such thing.

David Latané

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Va.

Stephen Schulhofer is dead right in pointing out the deficiencies of modern rape and sexual-assault law. Yet effecting the changes he advocates without somehow distinguishing encounters between people known to each other from those between strangers invites prosecutorial abuse.

As it addresses sexual activity between total strangers, the current state of the law may have serious shortcomings, imposing on prosecutor and victim the heavy burden of showing force or refusal. But with sexual activity between people known to each other in some manner, and for some time, the current law affords protection against the emotional backlash, and possible appetite for revenge, of a failed relationship. With a relaxation of the elements of proof in all sexual-assault and rape cases, the way may become open for scorned partners to vent a hellish fury.

Michael E. Zuller

Great Neck, N.Y.

Stephen Schulhofer suggests that we need to broaden the scope of the law regarding rape by embracing his notion of sexual autonomy, and then concedes that this will invariably criminalize relationships that don't necessarily warrant such action.

He points out studies showing how women can manipulate a sexually charged environment, but later implies that these same women, who are sophisticated enough to send out ambiguous messages, are somehow incapable of discerning the same in others, and of dealing with the consequences if they are mistaken.

Should men be held liable for their failure to properly interpret a woman's desires? If sex is unwanted yet nonetheless consummated, should a criminal prosecution be contemplated? My feeling is that juries would be unwilling to criminalize sex that was unwanted yet apparently consensual. A suggestion—one that has recently arisen in the area of sexual harassment—is to use tort law for redress.

The advantage of using tort law is that it would shift the burden of proof toward the male while also lowering the threshold of proof that would be required in a criminal case. Women who feel that they have been victimized can try to recover damages in civil court. Juries and judges who may be reluctant to put people away for what may have been a reasonable mistake might be willing to remedy cases where the woman can show harm as the result of the invasion of her "sexual autonomy."

Our criminal courts are having difficulty trying to determine when people are liable for their own behavior. Schulhofer's prescription would make the law's answer murkier. How can we teach a concept of rape with any clarity and efficacy if it becomes a catch-all phrase for a large percentage of sexual encounters?

Neil Brown

Princeton Junction, N.J.

Stephen Schulhofer replies:

Numerous studies estimate the incidence of unwanted sexual demands by women's professors and by their workplace supervisors, psychotherapists, and doctors. As detailed in my book *Unwanted Sex*, one survey (reported by the researchers Linda Rubin and Sherry Borgers) found that 15 percent of female undergraduates had been the target of unwanted sexual advances from a faculty member; at the graduate level unwelcome sexual pressure was even more frequent.

With allowances for the possible imprecision of such surveys, it is reasonable (and conservative) to estimate that at least 10 percent of college women experience unwanted sexual pressure from a professor or an instructor. Since there are nearly seven million women in college, that estimate suggests that approximately 700,000 women face a faculty member's unwanted sexual demands at some point in their college experience, an incidence level of at least 175,000 a year. Comparable surveys suggest that roughly a million working women each year confront unwanted sexual demands from their supervisors, and every study of psychotherapists and physicians points to high rates of unwanted, highly damaging sexual contact between patients and those entrusted with their care.

Precisely because these are encounters between acquaintances, we cannot content ourselves with Michael Zuller's proposal to reform only the rules applicable to stranger rape. Neil Brown rightly emphasizes that tort remedies are often preferable to criminal sanctions, and better professional regulation is another useful approach; my book discusses both options in detail.

Mad-Cow Disease

In "Could Mad-Cow Disease Happen Here?" (September *Atlantic*), Ellen Ruppel Shell may have the reader believe that where the U.S. Department of Agriculture is concerned, regulatory and surveillance actions have been very limited and were only recently implemented.

In 1989 the USDA banned the importation of live ruminants and most ruminant products from the United Kingdom and other countries where bovine spongiform encephalopathy was di-

Australia

Enjoy our five-star dining or
five billion-star dining.

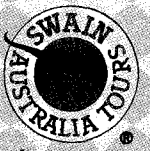


Good Living Travel Package

- 12 days, 11 nights,
5-star hotel and
quaint local
accommodations
- Round-trip air
and transfers
- Sydney, Melbourne,
Ayers Rock and
Kangaroo Island
- Many extra tours

\$3,899*

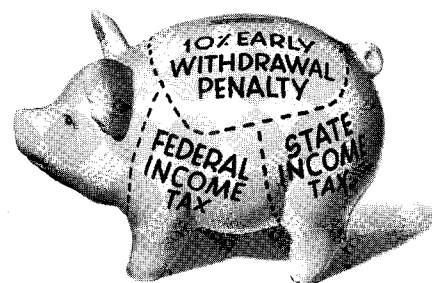




1 (800) 22-SWAIN
www.SwainAustralia.com
Call toll free for a free brochure

* Price per person, double occupancy. Based on departures from LA, 4/13/99 to 8/31/99. Includes first-class accommodation, private transfers, coach touring, and inter-Australian and international flights. Seasonal surcharges apply. Government charges of up to \$75 not included. Certain conditions and restrictions apply. CST#: 2012413-40. ©1999 Australian Tourist Commission.

Switching Jobs Can Have An Unfortunate Effect On Your Retirement Savings.



**Don't Lose 40% Or More Of Your Retirement Plan To Taxes And Penalties.
Call For Your Free Information Kit Today.**

T. Rowe Price can help. Call for our free kit on managing the payout from your former employer's retirement plan. The kit clearly explains the pros and cons of all the distribution options, so you



can decide what's best for you. Because we'd hate to see your retirement plan go all to pieces.

1-800-401-5348

Invest With Confidence
T. Rowe Price



Request a prospectus with more complete information, including management fees and other charges and expenses. Read it carefully before you invest or send money.
T. Rowe Price Investment Services, Inc., Distributor.

IRAR045199

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chairman

MORTIMER B. ZUCKERMAN

Co-Chairman

FRED DRASNER

Vice Chairman and Editorial Director

HAROLD EVANS

Chief Executive Officer and Group Publisher

IRA ELLENTHAL

President and Chief Operating Officer

ERIC J. GERTLER

Senior Vice President

KIMBERLY SMITH JENSEN

Advertising

DONNA PALMER, National Advertising Director

MATTHEW BARBA, Eastern Advertising Manager

MARA HART FILO, Vice President, Detroit

Managers: CAROL BROWN, DANNA FELIPE, J. G. FINK,

NICOLE FADNER FRIESE, MARIE ISABELLE,

LUANNE LACARRERE, ALAN MORRIS, STEVE PESZEK,

CHRISTOPHER SCHUBA, CHRIS WATSON

Assistants: SIA BATTLE, ANN MARIE NICHOLSON,

GLENDIA RODRIGUEZ

Marketing

DEBORAH B. FARNHAM, Director

KELLIE CORIALE, ISABELLA HOLAZO,

APRIL LEE, CORI LORENZON

Circulation

HOWARD KATZ, Vice President

ADAM R. COHEN, Subscription Director

STEVEN CAPONE, JOHN M. KALINOWSKI,

ANGEL OLIVERAS, ERIKA PERZI

Production & Special Projects

JAN MORRIS, Director

MARGARET BOWEN, GINA HAHN,

JOHN KEFFERSTAN, JULIA PARKER, AMY SWAN

Finance

MARY BETH BORGWING, Director

FRANCES ARMSTRONG, LUCY XIUXIA WEI

Public Relations

KATIE CROCKER, GRAHAM JAMES

General Counsel

MARK ROTENSTREICH

Atlantic Unbound

The Atlantic Monthly's digital edition can be found on the Web at www.TheAtlantic.com. There readers will find current and past issues of *The Atlantic*, regular online-only columns and interviews, poetry readings, articles from *The Atlantic's* archive, and more. In Post & Riposte, an online forum, visitors can engage in discussion with Atlantic readers worldwide.

Advertising Offices

The Atlantic Monthly

450 West 33rd Street

New York, NY 10001

(212)716-6800

Subscriptions & Reprints

Please direct all subscription queries and orders to

Atlantic Subscription Processing Center

Box 52661

Boulder, CO 80322

Reprint requests should be made to

Reprint Management Services

(717)560-2001

The **Atlantic Monthly**

agnosed (the ban was subsequently expanded to include all of Europe). Since 1990 the USDA has conducted extensive educational outreach to veterinarians, cattle producers, laboratory diagnosticians, and others about the clinical signs of BSE. The department's active BSE surveillance also dates back to 1990. It was expanded in 1993 to include examination of brain tissue from "downer cows," and again in 1994 to incorporate new technology for testing brains for the abnormal form of the prion protein that is indicative of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies.

Shell states that Europe prohibited rendered products of cow and sheep carcasses from being manufactured and labeled as feed for hogs, chickens, and other farm animals. To clarify: Europe prohibits the feeding of mammalian protein to ruminants. Its regulations, like the regulations of the Food and Drug Administration, do have a provision allowing the feeding of pig and poultry protein to ruminants under certain conditions. And furthermore, European legislation still allows the use of ruminant protein in feed for pigs and poultry.

"Downer" is a slang term for any cow that cannot rise. Cows may be down for a number of reasons, such as broken bones, muscle or joint injuries, and metabolic disorders. With treatment many cattle recover. Shell mentions a common estimate of the number of downer cattle in the United States. We have attempted to research this subject in the past, and have determined that no one really has an accurate number, especially since many animals do get up. In cooperation with the American Association of Bovine Practitioners, we have developed a survey that has been distributed to their members in an attempt to obtain a better estimate of the number of downer cows, an explanation of why they go down, and information about how many recover.

In her synopsis of the U.S. scrapie-control program, Shell states that the 1983 change to blood-line depopulation made no sense, because the disease spreads laterally. This is not a fair statement if evaluated against the knowledge of the times. Work done in the United Kingdom and observations made in the United States suggested strong blood-line ties. Scrapie was thought to

be a genetic disease. With the discovery of the PrP gene, we now know that genetics plays a role in either incubation times or susceptibility but is not the sole cause of scrapie.

Linda A. Detwiler

*U.S. Department of Agriculture
Robbinsville, N.J.*

Ellen Ruppel Shell replies:

Linda Detwiler raises many issues, most of which do not contradict what I said in the article and serve only to distract from the central issue. Although the USDA has certainly taken some action to prevent the incidence and spread of mad-cow disease in the United States, it has not taken what many experts consider to be the practical and necessary steps of outlawing the inclusion of neurological material from cows in the food supply and of forbidding the inclusion of infectious material in rendered products. As a result, Americans continue to be exposed to a potential risk.

Intellectual Property

“Who Will Own Your Next Good Idea?” (September *Atlantic*), an article about intellectual-property rights, should be especially careful in its citation of “borrowings.” Charles Mann states that “Steve Jobs, of Apple Computer, saw [the windows-and-mouse interface] demonstrated on a tour of PARC [the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center] in 1979. He borrowed the idea, hired some of its creators, and went on to build the Macintosh.” A number of books and articles have long since debunked that myth. I proposed the Macintosh project to Apple's management in March of 1979; designing started immediately; and the Macintosh became an official Apple project under my leadership in September of that year. Jobs's cited first visit to PARC didn't take place until months later.

Jef Raskin

Pacifica, Calif.

Charles Mann, like many others who write about “fair use,” obfuscates an important distinction—namely, between copying that is done in the traditional way he applauds toward the end of his

article (with one author building upon earlier ones through quotation and intellectual borrowing), and copying that does nothing but multiply the number of copies that exist, which is what photocopying and, now, digital copying are. As Judge Jon O. Newman said in writing the court's opinion in the famous Texaco case, "Whatever social utility copying of this [latter] sort achieves, it is not concerned with creative authorship" in the way that the former, "transformative" type of copying is.

Although the section of the copyright law that is devoted to "fair use" (Sec. 107) does give limited sanction to merely duplicative copying, it is a far different kind of copying, which has a much different role in contributing to the public good, than "transformative" copying, and people who engage in this debate over the value of more or less copyright protection would do well to keep this distinction in mind.

Sanford G. Thatcher
Penn State University Press
University Park, Penn.

Charles C. Mann replies:

Jef Raskin is correct: he did lead the original Macintosh project. But after Steve Jobs went to PARC, he essentially ejected Mr. Raskin and radically changed the project's direction.

Sanford Thatcher's distinction between "transformative" and "duplicative" copying is important. Alas, it is increasingly difficult to maintain. At a time when a few mouse clicks can copy entire songs, books, and movies, it is hard to figure out a system that allows people to copy small, permissible chunks of material for commercial use and whole works for private use while simultaneously blocking the reproduction of entire works for widespread use.

Assessing Poverty

In "The Hidden Side of the Clinton Economy" (October *Atlantic*), John E. Schwarz observes, "That workers take and keep jobs paying menial wages is generally a mark of an aggregate *undersupply* of employment." One consequence: "workers' real wage increases have failed even to keep up with improvements in their productivity."

But there is another explanation for the troublingly slow growth of real income for people at the lower end of the scale—an *oversupply* of low-skill workers, an important consequence of high levels of immigration, legal and illegal, by people with little education and few skills.

The United States is among the most inequitable of the advanced democracies in income distribution. We should establish a high and rising standard of living for citizens as our principal economic goal, as Michael Porter argued in *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*. That will require a lot more effort in education and training, along with continuing upward pressure on the minimum wage. But it will also require a significant reduction in the flow of low-skill immigrants.

Lawrence E. Harrison
Vineyard Haven, Mass.

John E. Schwarz replies:

Lawrence Harrison is correct that a surplus of labor provides an element of the explanation. This surplus is due in part to immigration. An even larger cause, though, is the tidal wave of new workers who have entered the labor market over the past three decades or so, from the crowded Baby Boom generation and then from the children of that generation, the effect of which has been to double the size of the labor force, with a net addition of almost 70 million new workers since 1960. Still another important ingredient of the poor jobs picture has been the progressive weakening of organized labor. Thus most American workers—not just low-income workers—have seen their real wages stagnate over the past quarter century and fall significantly behind the gains in their productivity.

Editors' Note

Several lines in the introductory material for Jack Kerouac's letters ("The Kerouac Papers," November *Atlantic*) contained factual information gathered by Ann Charters; owing to an editing error, the source was not acknowledged. The second volume of Charters's annotated edition of Kerouac's letters is in preparation. Several of the letters that appeared in *The Atlantic* will be included in that volume.

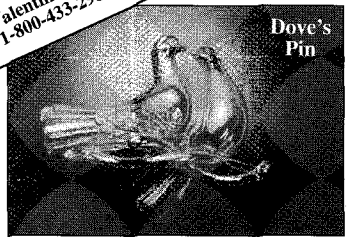
THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY offers you **FREE** *information* FROM OUR ADVERTISERS

TURN TO
PAGE 95

TO RECEIVE
FREE INFORMATION
ABOUT SOME OF
THE PRODUCTS
AND SERVICES OFFERED
IN OUR PAGES.
USE THE POSTAGE-PAID
REPLY CARD,
OR SEND
YOUR REQUESTS
TO THE
ADDRESS LISTED.

Valentine's Day
1-800-433-2988

Dove's Pin



Soul Mates
Symbol of Destiny

It is a knowing, a certainty from the very first moment... transcending all logic, all reason, a feeling emanating from the very depths of being... to be in the presence of our beloved is the greatest joy.

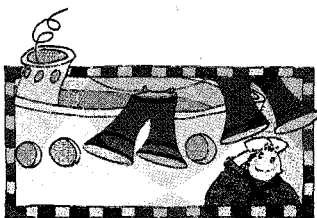
Our Soul Mates Doves Pin is a symbol of destiny... the inevitability of the joining of two. Comes beautifully gift wrapped with the sentiments expressed by this piece on a small card tucked inside the box.

Pin, 14K yellow gold \$395.00
Pendant, 14K yellow gold,
18" chain \$495.00
for diamond eyes add... \$100.00

Absolute Satisfaction Guaranteed
1-800-433-2988
Call M-F 9am - 4:30pm Shipping is free

Cross Jewelers
Jewelers to New England Since 1908
570 A Congress St., Portland, ME 04101 ©97

THE JANUARY ALMANAC



Government

This month the U.S. Navy begins updating its traditional work uniform, and will replace denim bell-bottomed trousers with straight-legged chino-like pants. The switch was mandated after most of the 1,500 male and female sailors who tested the new pants deemed them more comfortable, neater, and longer-lasting than the old ones. How the straight-legged pants will be generally received remains to be seen: the Navy made a similar change to its dress uniform in the 1970s, but reinstated bell-bottoms after an outcry. Also this month the first law in the country aimed at obviating divorce takes effect, on January 1. Florida's Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act encourages couples to take a premarital course within the year prior to applying for a marriage license (a draft of the bill would have required such a course). Courses can be taken from a variety of providers, and may include such topics as communication and financial and parenting responsibilities. Couples who complete a course save \$32.50 of Florida's \$88.50 marriage-license fee, and are exempted from the usual three-day wait for a license.

Food

The annual Girl Scout cookie-selling season begins this month. New offerings include Reduced-Fat Apple Cinnamon cookies—the seventh reduced-fat cookie introduced in the past four years. The reduced-fat cookies are, of course, a response to the growing

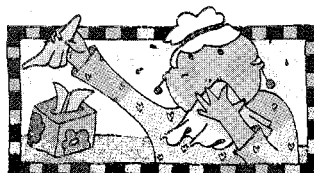


demand for healthful snacks, but so far only one, Reduced-Fat Lemon Pastry Cremes, has become a top seller. The old favorites still predominate: Thin Mints account for a quarter of the cookies sold each year, and Samoas for 17 percent. Last year the Girl Scouts sold more than 190 million boxes nationwide, generating revenues of about \$370 million. This money funds activities and is used to maintain property and train leaders, among other things; last year the Girl Scouts in the greater Washington, D.C., area had to sell some 85,000 boxes of cookies simply to pay the chapter's liability insurance.



Arts & Letters

This month, after waiting for years, scholars can gain broad access to the voluminous archives of one of the most important modern-art galleries—the Pierre Matisse Gallery, operated in New York for 60 years by the son of the Impressionist painter Henri Matisse. After Pierre Matisse died, in 1989, his widow and children created a foundation to organize the gallery's drawings, catalogues, photographs, and papers (Matisse wrote, and kept, some 2,000 letters about the shows he mounted and the works he sold); in the meantime, libraries and museums across the country vied for the collection, which was awarded last summer to New York's Pierpont Morgan Library. The archival items include a 1948 introduction by Jean-Paul Sartre to an exhibit of works by the Swiss artist Alberto Giacometti, and a gouache created by Joan Miró for a catalogue cover. Scholars can visit the archives by appointment; a number of exhibits are planned, to make some of the materials available to the public as well.



Demographics

January is a peak month for sales of facial tissue, because flu season usually reaches its height in late December or early January. Kleenex, the initial brand, has dominated the U.S. market since its introduction, in 1924. Kleenex's manufacturer, the Kimberly-Clark Corporation, has, of course, kept close track of trends in tissue use. Some recent findings: Americans go through about 200 billion tissues each year, with some availing themselves of more than 80 a week. Women use twice as many tissues as men do. Most users restrict themselves to one tissue at a time, and half fold the tissue before blowing their noses. Kleenex was first marketed as a disposable replacement for the towels used to remove makeup and cold cream; only after a survey showed that the majority of consumers regarded it instead as a hygienic substitute for pocket handkerchiefs was it promoted as such.

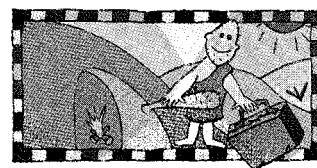
The Skies

January 1: Full Moon, also known this month as the Wolf or Yule Moon. 5: Observers with binoculars may be able to spot Neptune this evening, just to the right of Venus, low in the southwest after sunset. Early risers on the 9th and 10th will find the half Moon, Mars, and the bluish star Spica grouped high in the south an hour before sunrise. 31: Full Moon. Because it is the second one of the month, it qualifies as a Blue Moon.



Environment

January 1: Starting today, according to a state law passed in 1994, the Northern States Power Company, which owns the Prairie Island nuclear-power plant, in Red Wing, Minnesota, must set aside \$500,000 a year for each 122-ton cask of high-level nuclear waste it henceforth stores at the plant (there are no off-site facilities able to accept the waste). The money will be used for investment in clean, safe, renewable sources of energy. This is one of the first such arrangements to be legislated by a state government. Also starting today all printing and writing paper bought by the U.S. government must contain at least 30 percent recycled fiber. The government buys more than 100,000 tons of copier paper alone each year.



50 Years Ago

George Santayana, writing in the January, 1949, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: "Every generation is born as ignorant and willful as the first man; and when tradition has lost its obvious fitness or numinous authority, eager minds will revert without knowing it to every false hope and blind alley that tempted their predecessors. . . . Often things as they are become intolerable; there must be insurrection at any cost, as when the established order is not only casually oppressive but ideally perverse and due to some previous epidemic of militant madness become constitutional. Against that domination, established in willful indifference to the true good of man and to his possibilities, any political nostrum, proposed with the same rashness, will be accepted with the same faith. Thus the blind in extirpating the mad may plant a new madness."

We didn't deliver any packages here, we just helped give him an address.

Mel Smith, UPS Atlantic District Manager
and Housing Works Intern



Every year for the past thirty years, UPS has sent a growing number of managers on a unique sabbatical. They leave behind their families and day jobs to spend a month living in communities that need help. They build houses. Tend to the sick. Feed the hungry. Through the UPS Community Internship Program, they not only help their new communities, they help themselves. They broaden their perspectives. They learn. And in the end, it makes them better managers. Not to mention better people. To learn more about what we do in the communities we serve, visit us at www.community.ups.com.



Technology Versus African-Americans

From the caravel to the cotton gin, technological innovation has made things worse for blacks. Will the information revolution be any different?

A FRIEND of mine owns a one-man computer firm specializing in the design and construction of Internet Web sites—those commercial, entertainment, and informational junctions in cyberspace that can be visited from personal computers around the world. From time to time he contracts for more work than he can handle, and then he posts an electronic want ad stating the number of lines of computer code to be written, the requisite computer language, the specific functions of the program being built, and the pay he's offering per line.

This ad is often answered by programmers from, as might be expected, Silicon Valley towns like San Jose and Palo Alto, or from Austin, Texas, or Cambridge, Massachusetts. The respondent might be someone recently laid off from Digital, a hacking grad student at Northwestern, or a precocious thirteen-year-old who learned the C++ language as an extra-credit project in middle school. The work is sent out over the Internet, and sent back ready to be incorporated into my friend's project. These programmers, whoever they are and wherever they're from, have proved reliable and punctual; their transactions, miraculous to the uninitiated, are so commonplace in the digital kingdom as to go unremarked.

Shortly after my friend began hiring extra help, he started getting responses from programmers in India. The Indians, often from the subcontinent's technological center of Bangalore, were savvy, literate, and, best of all, both fast and cheap—a contractor's dream. Accordingly, he has parceled out more and more programming to them and less and less to Americans. Not

so patriotic, but isn't that what GATT and NAFTA are all about?

Stories like this are usually presented as cautionary tales about the loss of American jobs to the hungry masses of the Third World. But there is another troubling aspect to this story, one that loomed larger for me as I learned about what my friend

did in his business and *how* he did it. Why weren't more African-Americans involved in these developments, this business revolution?

The activity was so clean, so sophisticated, and so lucrative; not least of all, it was the future.

I was reminded of the computer journalist Robert X. Cringely's documentary film *Triumph of the Nerds* (1996), about the creation of the current cyber-elite. Cringely spent time with young people at swap meets, watching them

become entranced with electronics and the technological future, building their own machines and dreaming of starting the next Apple.

There were no blacks in sight. Young black Americans, who could have been cashing in on the bonanza that was

then buzzing through cyberspace, *didn't appear to be aware of it*. What kind of

job could be more appropriate for a technologically literate inner-city youth than to perform this kind of service? Conceivably, it could be done

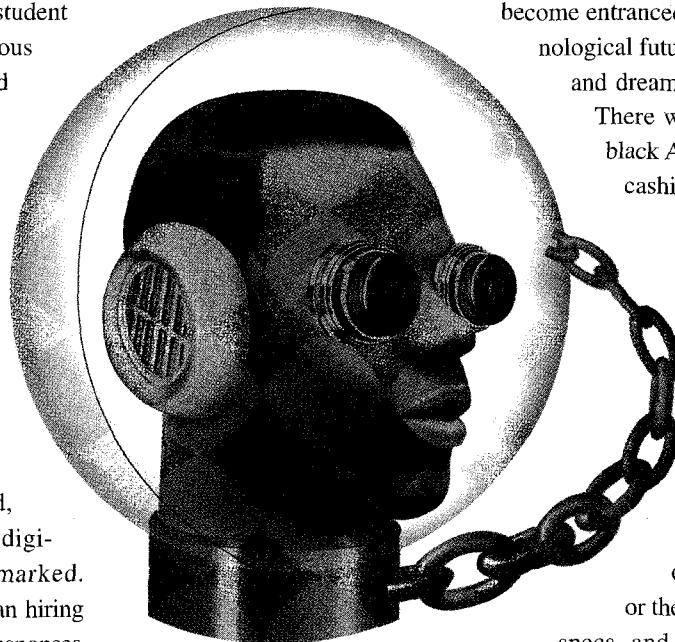
without any capital outlay: one could surf the Net at school

or the library, get the assignment and specs, and send the finished work back.

Democratic guerrilla capitalism. A good job at a good wage, as the presidential hopeful Michael Dukakis used to say.

There are high school kids working part time utilizing high-tech skills and college kids who are dropping out of school to work in the industry, if not starting their own com-

by Anthony Walton



OLYMPUS
Focus On Life

**WHEN WE SAY IT'S A POCKET CAMERA,
WE ACTUALLY MEAN THIS POCKET.**

Introducing the world's smallest 35mm zoom camera.

That's the new Olympus Stylus Epic Zoom 80 up there, actual size. How'd we manage to pack so many powerful features into such a small space? Well, we've been building surgical endoscopes for years now – and compared to squeezing those tiny cameras into the minute passageways inside the human body, slipping this one into your coin pocket was a snap. And hey, shouldn't the smallest pocket camera fit into your smallest pocket?

EXCLUSIVE AUTO COLOR BALANCING FLASH • WEATHERPROOFING • FILL-IN FLASH • RED-EYE REDUCTION • INTELLIGENT FLASH SYSTEM

In USA call 1-800-6-CAMERA or write Olympus America Inc., 2 Corporate Center Drive, Melville, NY 11747. In Canada: Carsten Group, Inc., Toronto. <http://www.olympus.com>

panies. And as for the kids at Cringely's swap meet, it's not *likely* that any of them will start the next big thing, but it is at least possible. Apple, Hewlett Packard, and Oracle were all started with almost no capital by folks fooling around in their garages.

Where are the armies of ghetto youths ready to meet the innovation and programming needs of an exponentially expanding electronic frontier and get rich in the process, in what is perhaps the last gold rush in American history?

The history of African-Americans during the past 400 years is traditionally narrated as an ongoing struggle against oppression and indifference on the part of the American mainstream, a struggle charted as an upward arc progressing toward ever more justice and opportunity. This description is accurate, but there is another, equally true way of narrating that history, and its implications are as frightening for the country as a whole as they are for blacks as a group. The history of African-Americans since the discovery of the New World is the story of their encounter with technology, an encounter that has proved perhaps irremediably devastating to their hopes, dreams, and possibilities.

From the caravels, compasses, navigational techniques, and firearms of the first

technology has as much to do with issues of class and wealth as it does with race, but such a critique verges on the disingenuous. As a group, blacks still lag well behind whites economically, and they have often suffered from the uses of technology in ways that other groups have not. In fact, they were often intentionally singled out to suffer. Poor whites, non-black Hispanics, and Asians were not dragged from their native lands to work as slaves and then buffeted for hundreds of years by the vagaries of technology and an economy they did not control. The historical experience of each ethnic group is unique and composed of its own problems and opportunities (or lack thereof).

What is intriguing, and deeply disturbing, is that blacks have participated as equals in the technological world only as consumers, otherwise existing on the margins of the ethos that defines the nation, underrepresented as designers, innovators, and implementers of our systems and machines. As a group, they have suffered from something that can loosely be called technological illiteracy. Though this has not been the point of technological innovation, it has undeniably been its fallout. It is important that we understand and come to terms with this *now*; there are technological developments in the making that could permanently affect the destiny of black Americans, as Americans and as global citizens. The dark possibility presented by the end of highly paid low-skilled labor, ever more powerful information machines, and global capitalism renders current policy disagreements over welfare, affirmative action, integration versus separatism, and the like trivial by comparison.

These issues, in my view, go to the very marrow of black experience in North America. They may also become a matter of survival for blacks as a group and for the nation as a whole, since those two fates are inextricably connected. As the world gets faster and more information-centered, it also gets meaner: disparities of wealth and power strengthen; opportunities change and often fade away. How can black Americans achieve the promise of America when that promise is largely predicated on the sector of the country's economy (and history) that has proved most costly to them—when the disturbing outcome of their almost 500 years of encountering Western technolo-

gy and its practitioners is that many regard them as at best the stepchild of the American experiment?

Europeans had prowled the Mediterranean for 2,000 years, sailing from Greece to Rome, from Rome to Egypt, from Spain to Morocco, and on hundreds of other routes, before any systematic sailing craft or technique was developed. In the 1400s the Portuguese prince who came to be known as Henry the Navigator (1394–1460) dispatched a series of voyages to make maps and chart data; by the mid-1440s the Portuguese, in search of new, unexploited trade routes, had reached Cape Verde and the Senegal River.

As they worked their way down the northwestern African coast, the Portuguese came up against what seemed at first an insurmountable problem: strong winds and currents from the north meant that a ship returning to Lisbon would have to travel long distances against the wind. Enter the caravel, with its three masts and large sails—a perfectly designed solution to the problem, and the machine that allowed Portugal to rule the waves from West Africa to India for a hundred years.

The Atlantic slave trade was one of the industries that emerged from this new capability. Western technology was involved with the rise of black slavery in other ways as well: Arab and African slave traders exchanged their human chattels for textiles, metals, and firearms, all products of Western technological wizardry, and those same slavers used guns, vastly superior to African weapons of the time, in wars of conquest against those tribes whose members they wished to capture.

The slave wars and trade were only the first of many encounters with Western technology to prove disastrous for people of African descent. In the United States, as in South America and the Caribbean, the slaves were themselves the technology that allowed Europeans to master the wilderness. Then, in 1793, as the efficiency of the slave economy on cotton plantations (where slaves cost more to maintain than they could generate in profits) was being questioned in some quarters, Eli Whitney, of Connecticut, invented a simple gin that allowed harvested cotton to be picked clean of seeds—an essential

As the great American technopolis was built, blacks were mired in Reconstruction and Jim Crow.

Portuguese explorers who reached the coast of West Africa in the 1440s to the never-ending expansion of microchip computing power and its implications for our society, the black community has had one negative encounter after another with the technological innovations of the mainstream. Within American history this aspect of blacks' experience is unique. One might argue that the disadvantageous situation of blacks vis-à-vis

step before milling—on a far greater scale than had previously been possible.

Suddenly rendered cost-efficient, cotton farming became a way to get rich quick. Thousands of black Africans were imported to do the work; in Mississippi alone the number of slaves increased from 498 in 1784 to 195,211 by 1840. Here were the roots of the millions of African-Americans who would come to populate the industrial Midwest, from Kansas City to Chicago to Pittsburgh to Buffalo. Those blacks, in the great migrations following the world wars, would compose the urban proletariat that is both pouring forth black success stories and struggling with social pathologies so difficult as to seem unsolvable.

The largest northward migration of blacks took place during and after the Second World War. This exodus was largely a result of the invention of the mechanical cotton picker, which enabled three or four workers to perform a task that on some farms had required hundreds if not thousands of hands. Displaced by machinery and no longer needed in the underdeveloped American South, where they had been brought solely to do this kind of work, they went north to the industrial cities, where they encountered another kind of technology—the great factories of mass production. It was a violent shift for many whose families had known only agriculture for hundreds of years. And the Irish, Slavic, German, and Italian immigrants who were already there, felt they'd done their time, and were ready to move up resented the new competition that drove down wages. Many of the most vicious and enduring stereotypes about blacks were born of this resentment.

When those northern factories began closing and moving offshore, owing to the information and communications revolutions of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, blacks were left behind in the inner cities of the Rust Belt, suffering from the metamorphosis of our society into a series of suburban megalopolises. Improvements in communications and transportation have struck the further blow of rendering the city irrelevant as a business and economic center, allowing mainstream money to be pulled out. The resulting isolation and deprivation, most eloquently outlined in the theories of the Harvard sociologist William Julius Wilson, account for the desolate urban land-

scapes we now see in parts of Detroit, Chicago, and Gary, Indiana.

Technology in and of itself is not at fault; it's much too simple to say that gunpowder or agricultural machinery or fiber optics has been the enemy of an entire group of people. A certain machine is put to work in a certain way—the purpose for which it was designed. The people who design the machines are not intent on unleashing chaos; they are usually trying to accomplish a task more quickly, cleanly, or cheaply, following the imperative of innovation and efficiency that has ruled Western civilization since the Renaissance.

Yet another aspect of technology's great cost to blacks should be considered: while the Gilded Age roared through the last part of the nineteenth century and Carnegie, Rockefeller, Vanderbilt, and others made the first great American fortunes as they wired, tracked, and fueled the new industrial society, blacks were mired in Reconstruction and its successor, Jim Crow. This circumscription limited their life prospects and, worse, those of their descendants. As the great American technopolis was built, with its avatars from Thomas Edison to Alfred P. Sloan to Bill Gates, blacks were locked out, politically and socially—and they have found it difficult to work their way in.

Blacks have traditionally been poorly educated—look at the crisis in urban public schools—and deprived of the sorts of opportunities that create the vision necessary for technological ambition. Black folkways in America, those unspoken, largely unconscious patterns of thought and belief about what is possible that guide aspiration and behavior, thus do not encompass physics and calculus. Becoming an engineer—unlike becoming a doctor or a lawyer or an insurance salesman—has not been seen as a way up in the segregated black community. These folkways developed in response to very real historical conditions, to the limited and at best ambivalent interactions between blacks and technology in this country. Folkways, the “consciousness of the race,” change at a slower pace than societal conditions do—and so a working strategy can turn into a crippling blindness and self-limitation.

Some blacks—like my father, who worked for nearly fifty years in a factory

THE BOFFINS BAFFLED

What chemistry, we are often asked, takes place in the succulent bosom of the sherry casks where The Macallan lies slumbering for a decade (at least) before it is allowed out to meet the bottle?

The fact is, we do not know.



It is a matter of history, of course, that someone in the last century discovered that whisky ages best in oaken casks which have previously contained sherry (and that today The Macallan is the last malt whisky exclusively to be so matured).

And it is a matter of fact that in goes the translucent stripling spirit. And out comes amber-gold nectar positively billowing with flavour.

But let us take our cue from a party of scientists whom we once invited to explore the matter. ‘Magic!’ they exclaimed, swigging their drams in a most unboffinly manner. ‘But magic is merely undiscovered science and we’d like to take some home for further investigation.’

THE MACALLAN. THE MALT.

THE MACALLAN® Scotch Whisky. 43% alc./vol.
Sole U.S. importer Rémy America, Inc., New York, N.Y.
© 1998 Macallan-Glenlivet P.L.C.

MARTINI, STRAIGHT UP

The Classic
American Cocktail
by Lowell Edmunds

"The book itself is strongly intoxicating, which perhaps explains why I broke the rule of fourteen years and mixed myself a Martini while reading it. I felt much better for the drink, and almost anyone who tries it will feel much better for reading the book. It will vex only admirers of Jack London, prigs, revolutionaries, and admirers of Ernest Hemingway."—Hugh Brogan

\$24.95 hardcover

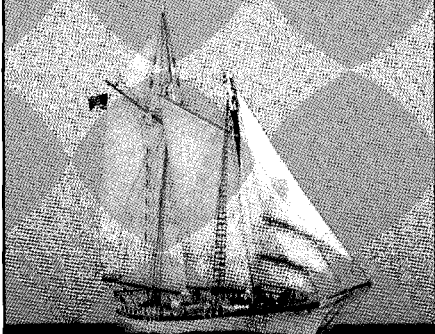
Available at
bookstores
1-800-537-5487

The Johns Hopkins University Press

Read
Chapter One at
www.press.jhu.edu

OCEAN CLASSROOM

is for high-school student-explorers
who know that learning is
found in challenge.



Ocean Classroom semester-at-sea
combines academic excellence
with seafaring adventure.

Sailing fall and spring term aboard
the schooner HARVEY GAMAGE
New England to the Caribbean Sea
Fully accredited by Proctor Academy

CALL 1-800-724-SAIL

that, ironically, recently moved from Illinois to the low-wage Mississippi he left as a boy—have been able to operate within these narrow parameters, to accept slow and steady progress while positioning their children to jump into the mainstream. But blacks are also Americans, and as such are subject not only to notions of a steady rise but also to the restless ambition that seems a peculiarly American disease. Not channeled to follow the largely technological possibilities for success in this society, black folkways have instead embraced the sort of magical thinking that is encouraged by the media and corporations whose sole interest in blacks is as consumers.

You, too, can be Michael Jordan or Coolio—just buy the shoes, just have the right look. No need to study, no need to work, the powers that be are against you anyway. Young blacks believe that they have a better chance of becoming Jordan, a combination of genes, will, talent, and family that happens every hundred years, than of becoming Steve Jobs, the builder of two billion-dollar corporations, the first one started with his best friend while tinkering in his garage. They also don't dream of becoming programmers at Cisco Systems, a low-profile computer giant that hires 5,000 new workers a year and scours the globe to find them. Blacks make up 13 percent of the population in this country, yet in 1995 they earned a shockingly low 1.8 percent of the Ph.D.s conferred in computer science, 2.1 percent of those in engineering, 1.5 percent in the physical sciences, and 0.6 percent in mathematics. As I lamented earlier, the very opportunities that would allow young blacks to vault over decades of injury and neglect into the modern world go unclaimed—even unseen.

Mastery of technology is second only to money as the true measure of accomplishment in this country, and it is very likely that by tolerating this underrepresentation in the technological realm, and by not questioning and examining the folkways that have encouraged it, blacks are allowing themselves to be kept out of the mainstream once again. This time, however, they will be excluded from the greatest cash engine of the twenty-first century. Inner-city blacks in particular are in danger, as "clean communities"—such as Du Page County, outside Chicago, and the beautiful suburbs that ring the decay

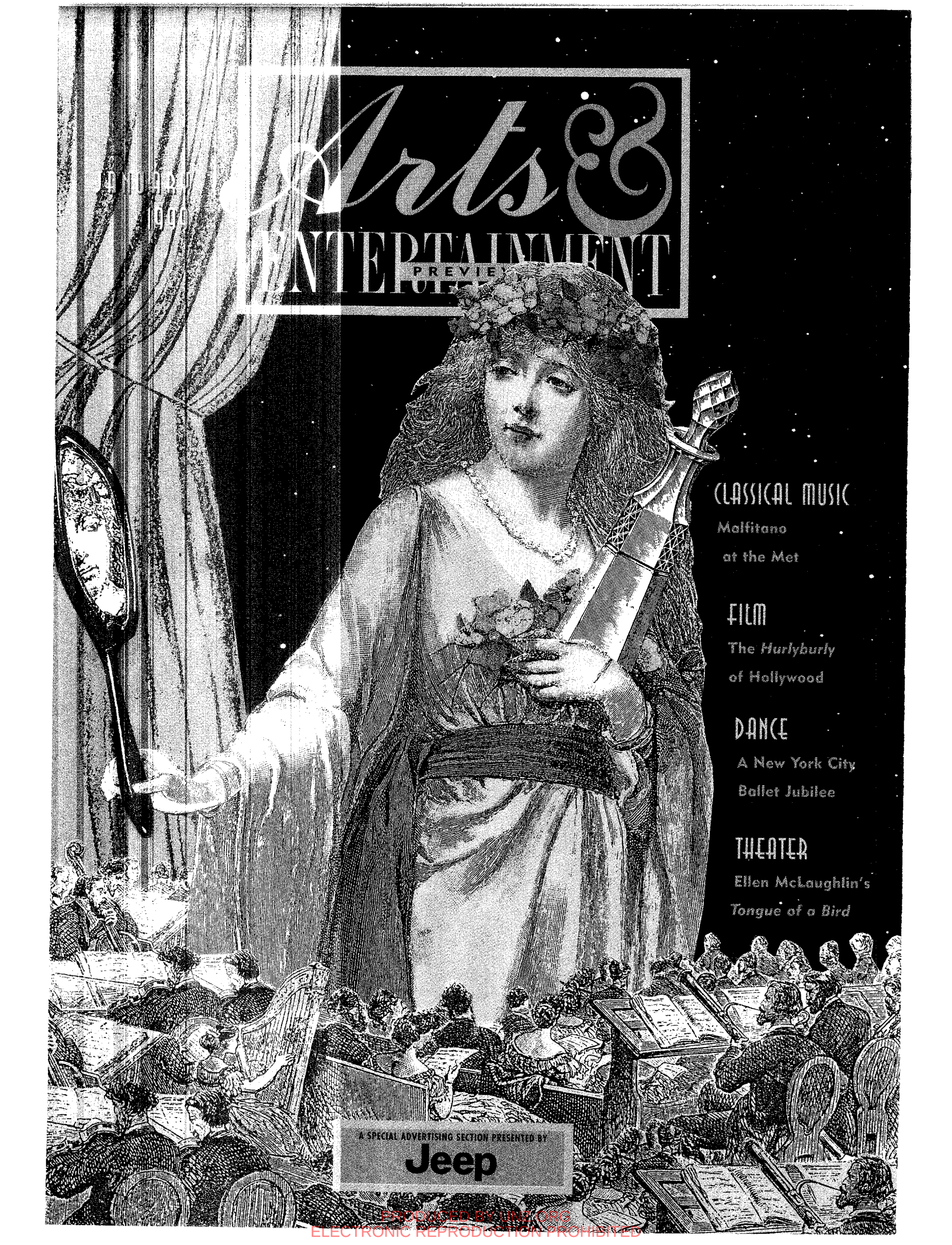
of Hartford, glittering cybercities on the hill, the latest manifestation of the American Dream—shed the past and learn to exist without contemplating or encountering the tragedy of the inner city.

But all dreams end, and when we wake, we must face reality. Despite these trends, and the dangers they imply, not all is lost. What might be accomplished by an education system that truly tried to educate *everyone* to excellence, not just the children of elites and of the suburbs?

*Young blacks
Americans, who could
be cashing in on
cyberspace, don't seem
to be aware of it*

Why not a technological Marshall Plan for the nation's schools? Even in this time of fiscal constriction and resistance to public expenditure—at least, any expenditure that does not directly benefit those doing the spending—such a plan is feasible. What if *ubertechnocrats* like Bill Gates and Larry Ellison (the billionaire CEO of Oracle) used their philanthropic millions to fund basic math and science education in elementary schools, to equip the future, instead of giving away merchandise that essentially serves to expand their customer base? That would be a gift worthy of their accomplishments, and one of true historical weight in the life of the nation.

And blacks must change as well. The ways that served their ancestors through captivity and coming to freedom have begun to lose their utility. If blacks are to survive as full participants in this society, they have to understand *and apply* what works *now*. Otherwise they will be unable to cross the next technological threshold that emerges in human civilization. Blacks have to imagine ways to encourage young people into the technological mainstream, because that looks like the future. In fact, it always has been the future, and blacks, playing catch-up yet again, must reach for it to ensure themselves a place at the American table. ☼



Arts & Entertainment

PREVIEW

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Malfitano
at the Met

FILM

*The Hurlyburly
of Hollywood*

DANCE

A New York City
Ballet Jubilee

THEATER

Ellen McLaughlin's
Tongue of a Bird

A SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION PRESENTED BY

Jeep

PRODUCED BY LINDA KING
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Classical Music

BY AUSTIN BAER

BORN OF SILENCE

Kanon *Pokajenen*, a major new score by the Estonian mystic Arvo Pärt, is a setting of a canon of repentance attributed to Saint Andrew of Crete (ca. 660–740). Eighty-three minutes of a cappella chant in ancient Church Slavonic may seem a recipe for ungodly tedium, but the recording by the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir under Tõnu Kaljuste offers sheer transcendence (ECM New Series). Listening without attempting to follow the text, you may be startled to hear words you understand (within the first few moments, “Israel” and “Pharaoh”). That,



Arvo Pärt

in turn, may move you to read along—no easy proposition. The liner notes include the original plus translations into English, French, and German, but they are printed one after another, rather than parallel. Even for someone with a knowledge of Cyrillic, Church Slavonic poses problems in the form of unfamiliar letters and numerous abbreviations. Perseverance pays off, because Pärt’s inspiration derives from the cadences of the language, which start to register more quickly than you might think possible. But even the unaided ear can hear both the strict musical grammar of *Kanon Pokajenen* and the wondrous flexibility of its poetic expression. Recurrent formulae—cries for mercy, benedictions, and the like—keep changing, like spontaneously mutating carillons. Music springs from silence to which it is destined to return, and the soul communes with the eternal. There are truths here beyond doctrine.

Austin Baer is a writer based in New York.

A SYMPATHETIC EAR

One Saturday afternoon last April the American soprano Catherine Malfitano celebrated her fiftieth birthday at the Met as the protagonist of Leoš Janáček’s *The Makropulos Case*. Broadcast live around the world (audio only, alas), it was a performance few who witnessed it will ever forget. Malfitano’s role—a sort of female Dorian Gray—is an enigmatic, egomaniacal diva with a past. Despite her ravishing voice and looks, she is 337 years old. But time is running out on her at last. Without another dose of the elixir she drank three centuries ago, she will soon have warbled her last. The opera revolves around her attempt to recapture the formula, and her realization that immortality is no blessing—that what makes life worth living is the prospect of death. The Met’s first attempt, a few seasons back, starring Jessye Norman, was a



Janáček’s *The Makropulos Case*

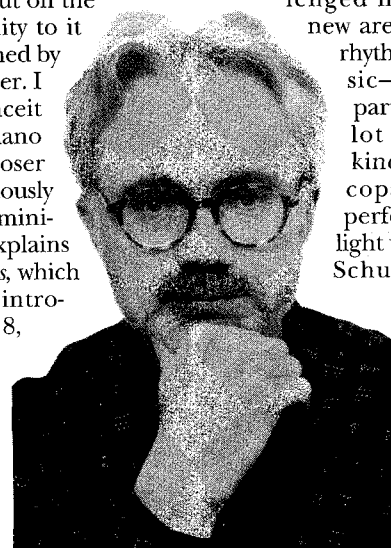
disappointment on virtually every count. But with Malfitano blazing at the center—a harpy with a heart of ice warming at last to the pathos of her common humanity—even the undistinguished production suddenly looked magnificent, and the music took fire. Impresarios wax sanctimonious about Janáček, congratulating themselves when they put on his operas and letting audiences know that he is good for them. But it takes performances of genius to lift the exercise beyond the realm of the academic. Malfitano’s sympathy with his characters and their music runs deep. Three cheers for the Met, which has asked her back to anchor this

season’s revival of *Káťa Kabanová*, an unsparing study of emotional tyranny, adultery, and suicide on the banks of the Volga (January 2, 5, 9, 13, 16, 21; 212-362-6000).

ROLLING ALONG

“I was listening very late one night to recordings of piano-roll music from the 1920s—everything from Jelly Roll Morton and Gershwin to Paderewski and Rachmaninoff. No matter what the music was, when it was translated through the medium of the piano roll, it came out on the other end with a unique quality to it that could not have been imagined by either a composer or a performer. I used that impression as a conceit for a sound world to base a piano concerto on.” Thus the composer John Adams, on whose voluptuously patterned music the label of minimalism sits a bit awkwardly, explains the background of *Century Rolls*, which The Philadelphia Orchestra introduces to its audiences January 8, 9, and 12 (215-893-1999). “The idea isn’t literal but sort of poetic. I wanted to get that slightly punchy, highly energized quality that the piano roll seemed to give to every piece. And since I was writing

for one of the most poetic and least mechanical pianists on the planet, I certainly didn’t want to turn him into an automaton.” That pianist is Emanuel Ax, who has already played the piece on two continents. “It’s an amazing experience,” the composer reports. “It has really challenged him to go into new areas, particularly rhythmically. My music—this piece in particular—owes a lot to jazz and a kind of spiky, syncopated style of performance that’s light years away from Schubert, Brahms, and Chopin, which are his normal habitat.”



John Adams, the composer of *Century Rolls*

ROBERTO MASOTTI

Film

BY ELLA TAYLOR

STEALING BOOTY

The movie gangster carries the weight of our fear of the lawless wild card, and our desire to be him as he merrily thumbs his nose at law and order. In his new movie, *The General*, John Boorman, the talented director of *Deliverance*, *The Emerald Forest*, and the recent *Beyond Rangoon*, seeks to humanize rather than glamorize (well, maybe a little) the life of the notorious Dublin gangster Martin Cahill, whose dazzlingly staged robberies confounded the police, the IRA, the Church, and the State in the 1980s. With his hair plastered to one side and one hand perennially shielding his face to avoid identification, Cahill is brilliantly portrayed by the hefty Irish actor Brendan Gleeson (*I Went Down*, *The Butcher Boy*) as a man with an almost



The General

infinitely elastic emotional range. By turns craven, sadistic, and sheepish, Cahill was a self-styled Robin Hood who loved to give as much as he loved to steal. He was also a devoted mate to his wife (Maria Doyle Kennedy) and, with her consent, her sister (Angeline Ball), with whom he had several children. Amid a slew of intelligent supporting actors, Jon Voight stands out as Inspector Ned Kenny, the world-weary Irish cop who has Cahill's number from the word go, and still respects him. Beautifully shot in black-and-white by Seamus Deasy, with a wonderful jazz and rock score adorned by original music from Van Morrison, *The General* is a funny, terrifying, and strangely lyrical experience for every second of its 129 minutes.

IDLE CHATTER

Once a year at least, Hollywood dispenses a confessional movie (the price the movie industry pays for continuing to be bad), flagellating its own for their venality, decadence, and amoral self-regard. The latest is *Hurlyburly*, adapted by David Rabe from his stage play and directed by Anthony Drazan (*Zebrahead*). Set in the Hollywood hills, home to the anxiously hip second tier of entertainment executives and also-ran celebrities, the movie opens with an obligatory round of sex, cocaine, and bad weather. The rest is talk—cell-phone talk, talk while taking meetings, talk while doing endless lines of coke, talk while humiliating women, talk even while mourning a friend's death—among four male friends tortured by failures of love and career and by the absence of meaning in their lives. Would that we had something to look at while all this chat was going on, other than the shiny, featureless surfaces of the supermodern hillside home shared by Eddie (Sean Penn) and his bleached-blond associate Mickey (Kevin Spacey), and frequently visited by Phil (Chazz Palminteri), an unemployed actor, and

Artie (Garry Shandling), a slick Hollywood player. Despite its excellent cast (Meg Ryan plays shrewdly against type as a tough but downtrodden stripper), *Hurlyburly* offers little more than cleverly constructed dialogue among a bunch of callow narcissists bent on self-destruction. When Eddie finds redemption, incongruously wrapped in the words of an underaged waif (Anna Paquin) he has earlier ravished within moments of their meeting, his enlightenment seems both false and pat. Who can sympathize with a man who can't stop blathering long enough for a moment's reflection?



Sean Penn in Hurlyburly



THE BEST-LAID SCHEMES

I am Raimi can do cheap thrills (*The Evil Dead*, *Darkman*) in his sleep, but in his new film the director tailors his gift for gothic horror to a character study of near-biblical moral power. In *A Simple Plan*, nimbly adapted by Scott B. Smith from his novel, Bill Paxton plays Hank Mitchell, an upstanding small-town midwesterner who, with his chronically unemployed older brother, Jacob (Billy Bob Thornton), and Jacob's pal Lou (Brent Briscoe), happens upon \$4 million in a snow-covered crashed plane. With a pretty wife, Sarah (Bridget Fonda), and a baby on the way, Hank has every reason to stay clean. From the moment the other two men talk Hank into keeping the money, all three become ensnared in a tragicomedy of bungled choices and unintended consequences that threaten to shatter their lives. Raimi knows exactly when to pull out the stops (crows pecking at dead human eyes) and when to shock by suggestion (when a man kills for the first time, we see only his face, screwed up in distaste). Paxton conveys a blend of vulnerability and steely resolve that's at once haunting and funny. Thornton, who overdid his simpleton role in *Sling Blade*, is here wonderfully abject as a slovenly lout whose capacity for ethical discrimination develops just too late to save himself and those he loves. A quiet film whose eerie loveliness is emphasized by Danny Elfman's ominous score, *A Simple Plan* elaborates with subtle intelligence the principle that given sufficient bait, even—perhaps especially—the most ostentatiously clean-living among us are capable of moral equivocation and betrayal.

Ella Taylor is a film critic for LA Weekly.

ANDREW ECCLES

SO ADVANCED,
IT CAN TELL
IF YOU HAVE
A FEVER
AND TAKE STEPS
TO MAKE
YOU MORE
COMFORTABLE.

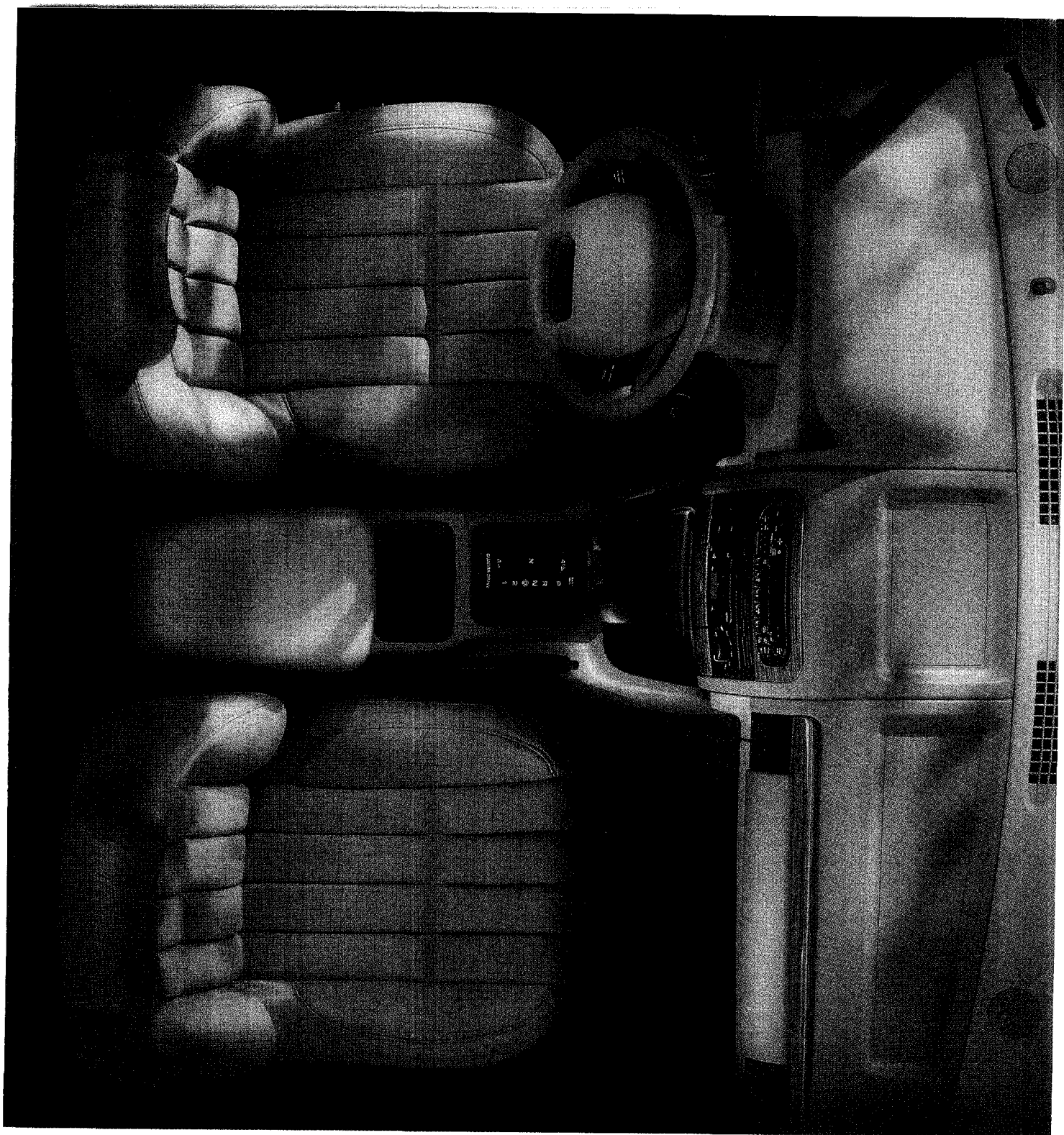


Is it possible to engineer thoughtfulness and vigilance into a vehicle? One ride in the all-new 1997 Jeep® Grand Cherokee Limited and you'll agree, its leather-trimmed cabin was built for your well-being.

The Infrared Dual Zone Climate Control, a world first, uses infrared technology to read ambient air surface body heat. Automatically, the system makes

THE ALL-NEW JEEP THE MOST CAPABLE

*Based on AMCI overall on- and off-road performance tests using Grand Cherokee with available



adjustments to maintain the desired cabin temperature.

Grand Cherokee Limited even has convenience built into the conveniences. Like steering wheel-mounted stereo/CD controls. Heated** 10-way power seats. Programmable controls for doors, stereo, headlamps, and more. In all, 13 customized features think about you without you ever having to give them a second thought.

It's not surprising then that the most capable sport utility* is also the most conscientious. To find out more, contact us at 1-800-925-JEEP or www.jeep.com.

Jeep

T H E R E ' S O N L Y O N E

GRAND CHEROKEE SPORT UTILITY EVER*

Quadra-Drive™ and V8 engine. **Optional. Jeep is a registered trademark of DaimlerChrysler.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dance and Theater

BY NANCY DALVA AND JOHN ISEL

NYCB JUBILEE

The way ballet, that European art form, became American was this: In 1933 Lincoln Kirstein brought George Balanchine to America. The following year they founded The School of American Ballet, because to make dances one needs dancers trained to one's specifications, which—for an innovator par excellence—continually evolve. In 1946 the two men founded the Ballet Society; in 1948 this morphed into what we now know as the New York City Ballet, the epitome and apotheosis of modernism in American ballet. To mark its fiftieth anniversary, the NYCB's winter and spring seasons include more than a hundred ballets, deployed in festive special programs (tickets 212-870-5570). The schedule, in fact, is reminiscent of the calendar at my children's school cafeteria, where the chef from time to time declares a theme meal—for instance, "Hawaiian Day," or "Mexican Fiesta." Somehow the folks at the NYCB got wind of this gambit: their schedule includes but is not limited to Russian, English, French, Austrian, German, Italian, and Polish tributes; a Robbins Celebration, a Balanchine Celebration, and an All-Balanchine Program. Two full-length ballets are also in there, along with four world premieres and numerous repertory revivals. These, apparently, will all be in house stagings, as is the company custom.

In other words, the originators of the roles will not be coaching, nor will the more recently retired dancers who inherited the roles later in Balanchine's lifetime. Thus, despite the look backward, the season promises to be not a referendum on the present but a view into the future. However it

all turns out (and good luck to the dancers!), this season will show us what the most wondrous of twentieth-century ballet treasures—the Balanchine repertory—will look like in the twenty-first.—N.D.

Nancy Dalva is the author of *Dance Ink*; Photographs. John Istel is the editor-in-chief at Stagebill.



Peter Boal in *Apollo*

COSTAS

REVIVING IPHIGENIA

In all of literature, perhaps no daughter measures up in mythic stature to Iphigenia, who was sacrificed by her father, Agamemnon, in order that the Trojan War could begin. She has drawn renewed attention from theater artists in recent years. The French director Ariane Mnouchkine

used *Iphigenia in Aulis* as a prologue to her ritualistic epic production of the complete *Oresteia* trilogy several years back. Ellen McLaughlin's *Iphigenia and Other Daughters* (1995) is a compilation of several Attic dramas. The director JoAnne



The Iphigenia Cycle

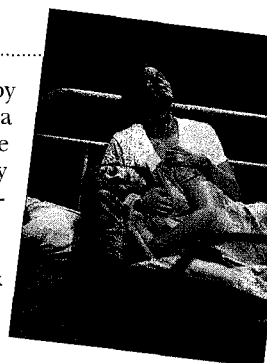
Akalaitis brings *The Iphigenia Cycle* to New York this month, thanks to the co-producers Theatre for a New Audience—one of the country's few institutions devoted to producing high-quality, uncompromising classic theater for students as well as adult audiences—and Chicago's Court Theatre, where the production debuted last season. Akalaitis is supremely suited to a re-examination of the iconic daughter, for if the theatrical avant garde ever crowned a mythic mother of invention, Akalaitis would be it. From her 1970s experiments with the downtown New York ensemble Mabou Mines and her uncompromising, Obie Award-winning approaches to Beckett to her more recent forays into the classic modern-drama canon, Akalaitis lights the lights. The director has always had an unnervingly brilliant sense of stage space and a clarity of vision. When applied to a classic text, the tragedy becomes transcendent. —J.I.

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

"I'm in the little plane again, waiting to take off." So begins *Days and Nights Within* (1984), one of the playwright Ellen McLaughlin's earliest efforts. Fifteen years later taking flight has become second nature to McLaughlin: as an actress, she created the role of the Angel who nightly crashed through the roof onto the Broadway stage in Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*. Her playwriting career has been a steadier ride. Her latest, *Tongue of a Bird*, taxis for takeoff at the Mark Taper Forum (213-628-2772), in Los Angeles, this month, before subsequent productions at New York's Public Theater (March; 212-260-2400) and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (July; 541-482-4331). Produced in London and Seattle to critical acclaim, the play combines poetic dialogue and vivid imagery in such lyrical fashion that the work practically levitates. Maxine, a search-and-rescue pilot, makes aerial sorties to look for a lost child; she's also searching for her mother and, ultimately, for her sense of self. In a monologue addressed to Amelia Earhart, Maxine explains the allure of the air: "It's solitude taken to the utmost extreme. You hear a snap and, yes, complete disconnection from the world. What wings do." As delicate as a balsa-wood glider, the

play, directed by the ever-able Lisa Peterson, has the potential to carry its author to higher altitudes.—J.I.

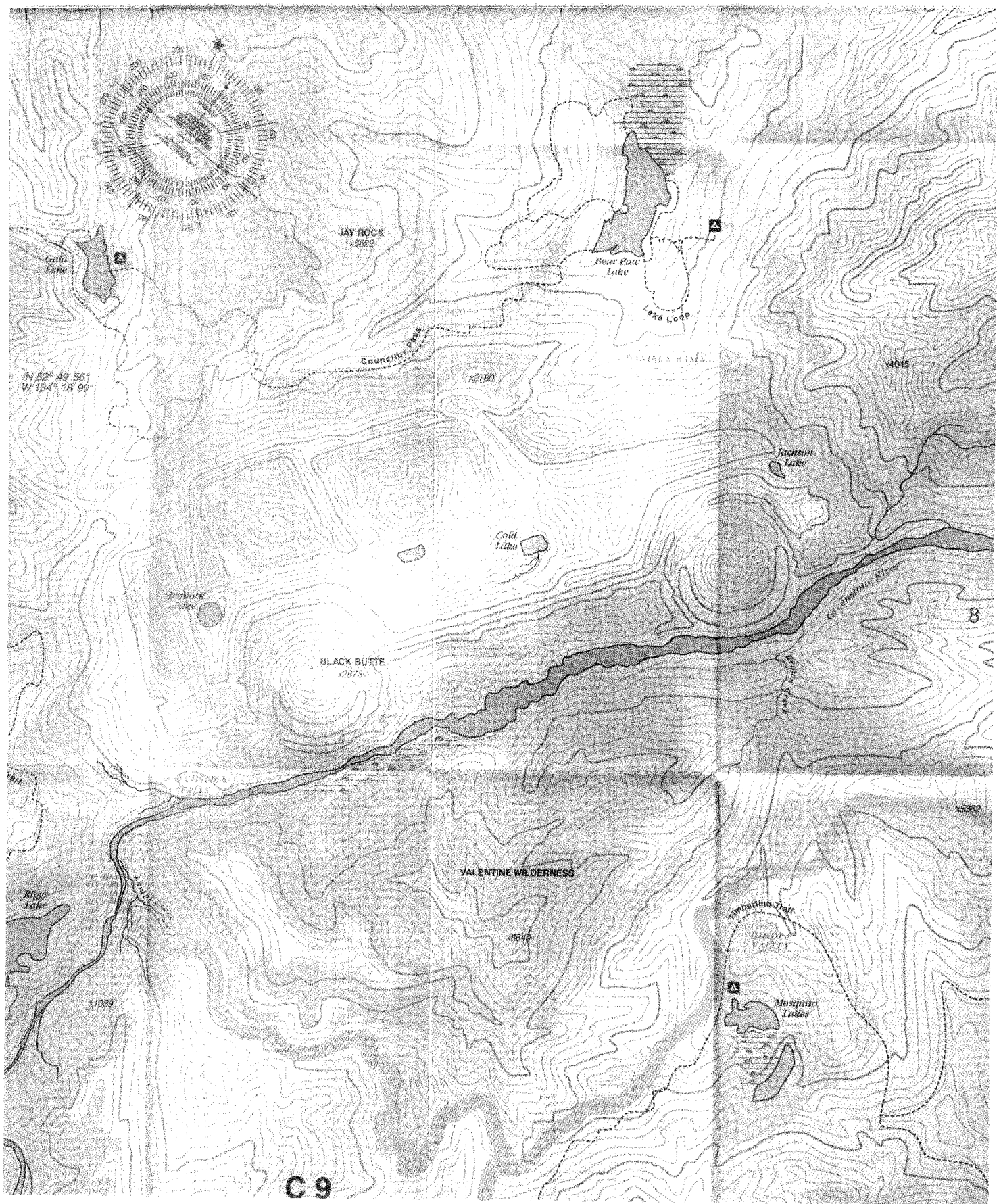
Jennifer Van Dyck and Gina Nagy in *Tongue of a Bird*



Jeep

THERE'S ONLY ONE

What happened to the Anasazi, the ancient inhabitants of the southwestern United States? Where did they disappear to—and why? Join the archaeologist Anan Raymond this January as he tours remote cliff dwellings in the latest installment of *Jeep Journey*. Jeep is proud to sponsor this exciting series and this month's edition of the Arts & Entertainment Preview.



Where every square inch of the terrain is steep, rocky, and rugged, you can often spot a Jeep 4x4.
To get a closer look, contact us at 1-800-925-JEEP or www.jeep.com

Jeep

THERE'S ONLY ONE

Always use seat belts. Remember, a backseat is the safest place for children. Jeep is a registered trademark of Chrysler Corporation.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Dead Souls

A prominent demographer warns that the spread of tuberculosis and AIDS in Russia will soon make Western hand-wringing over the pace of Russian "economic reform" seem quaint

HEALTH in Russia is even worse than most Russian and foreign commentary would indicate, and the consequences for Russian society, the Russian economy, and the Russian military will be enormous.

Environmental issues lurk behind much of the public-health problem. Radioactive contamination is rife. Chemical contamination, such as by dioxin, is largely to blame for the fact that life expectancy for both men and women in the town of Dzerzhinsk, in the region of Nizhegorodskaya, is no better than fifty years. At least until 1995 DDT continued to be used, despite an announcement by the Soviet government almost three decades ago of a ban on its production and use. Bad water na-

tionwide has led to high rates not only of bacterial dysentery but also of hepatitis and cholera. The air in Omsk is polluted; authorities two years ago distributed some 60,000 gas masks to residents. And thermal-power plants throughout the country are spewing forth carcinogens, owing to incomplete combustion. Lead emissions in Russia are about fifty times as great as those in all of the European Union. I have seen a Russian government report indicating that as a result of lead pollution in one locale, "76.5 percent of the children in the town are mentally retarded."

But even absent these environmental problems, public health in Russia would be appalling. I anticipate that an unprec-

edented surge in the incidence of infectious and parasitic diseases, combined with existing high levels of alcohol poisoning and violent death, will contribute to a continued lowering of life expectancy. The Russian population is likely to decline as well, by about 800,000 to a million people a year until 2010, when the total may well be no more than 138 million. Alcoholism, drug abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, malnutrition, and various chronic and infectious diseases already mean, among other things, that a third of the adult population is incapable of reproduction.

The incidence of tuberculosis in Russia has skyrocketed. The number of deaths ascribed to tuberculosis in Russia in 1996 (24,877) was almost 15 percent greater than the number of new infections (usually nonfatal) that year in the United States. The Russian mortality rate for tuberculosis is 16.9 per 100,000; the U.S. rate is 0.5. According to the State Statistical Agency, the number of new cases of tuberculosis that occurred in Russia in 1996 is 99,000—an official number that is in fact far too low. It is known that at least a tenth of prison inmates in Russia have tuberculosis, and that some 850,000 to one million Russians are in prison. Are these infected prisoners in the official data? For that matter, do the agency figures include the homeless, forced migrants, refugees, people living in railroad stations, people who avoid the medical establishment, and so on? I believe that the number of new cases is actually closer to 150,000 each year. And given that even ordinary pharmaceuticals are pathetically scarce, are not most of these people going to die of the disease?

If a memorandum titled "Epidemic Tuberculosis in Russia," prepared by the Ministry of the Interior and described in a *Newsday* article by Laurie Garrett, is even close to being correct, then the Russians face a bleaker future than they (or we) could have thought possible. To quote: "By the year 2000 the incidence of [tuberculosis] will increase '50 times compared with now'; mortality will increase seventy-fold; and deaths in children are expected to rise ninety-fold." If these predictions prove true, then Rus-

by Murray Feshbach

sian deaths attributable to tuberculosis will be more numerous than the total reported for heart disease and cancer. In 2000, according to these numbers, tuberculosis deaths in Russia will reach approximately 1.75 million, whereas I estimate that heart-disease and cancer deaths will number about 1.5 million. This says something extraordinary about the state of public health.

HIV and AIDS cases in Russia and deaths from AIDS are also on the verge of exploding. The former Minister of Health, Tatyana Dmitriyeva, has forecast that a million Russians will be infected with HIV by 2000. Assuming that only half that many are infected and that it costs "only" \$15,000 per patient per year to administer protease inhibitors, AZT, and 3TC, where is the \$7.5 billion a year for these drug cocktails to be found? The answer is nowhere. AIDS patients in Russia will die.

The growing number of Russian AIDS cases reflects a sharp rise in sexual promiscuity and hard-drug use. In the past five years syphilis cases among girls who are fourteen or younger have increased thirtyfold. Chlamydia rates are said to be very high in the same age group, though very few, and likely unreliable, data are available. How sick will these children be in subsequent years? Will they be able to have children themselves? Will their children also be sick? Will they become part of Russia's growing army of drug abusers, now thought to number four to six million? Many of them, of course, will simply die young.

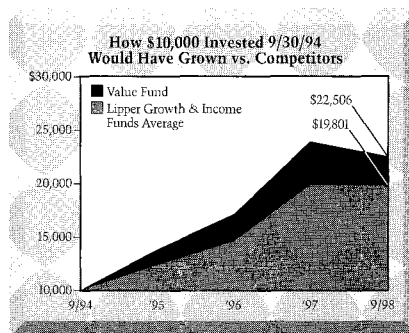
Here is another way of viewing the overall health situation: How many of today's sixteen-year-old males will survive to age sixty? In the United States the figure is about 83 percent. In Russia it is only 54 percent; a hundred years ago in the European part of Russia the figure was about 56 percent. Of course, many of the Russian men who survive to age sixty will be very sick.

Analysts specializing in geopolitics, economics, or the military who ignore these issues do so at the risk of overlooking Russia's most fundamental realities. So much of the shrinking Russian population may soon be so ill that long-term solutions to the country's political, economic, and military problems will be inconceivable. ☼

EXCEPTIONAL VALUE

100% NO LOAD

T. Rowe Price Value Fund offers solid, long-term capital growth potential with moderate risk. The fund invests in stocks of high-quality companies that appear temporarily undervalued in the market. These "bargains" have the potential to deliver significant appreciation as other investors recognize their underlying value. And, since the fund targets stocks already selling at relatively low prices, it offers less downside risk potential.



This strategy has proven effective to date. As the chart shows, the fund has outperformed its peer growth and income funds over time. Past performance cannot guarantee future results. **No sales charges.**

ASK
ABOUT
OUR

ROTH
IRA

**Call 24 hours for your
free investment kit
including a prospectus
1-800-541-6592
www.troweprice.com**

Invest With Confidence®
T. Rowe Price

-5.84%, 17.81%, and 22.48% are the fund's average annual total returns for the 1-year, 3-year, and since inception (9/30/94) periods ended 9/30/98, respectively. Return figures include changes in principal value, reinvested dividends, and capital gain distributions. Investment return and principal value will vary, and shares may be worth more or less at redemption than at original purchase. (Source for Lipper data: Lipper Analytical Services, Inc.) Read the prospectus carefully before investing. T. Rowe Price Investment Services, Inc., Distributor. VAL045200

HIGHLAND PARK
ORKNEY ISLANDS
PRODUCT

The Seven Rains of Orkney.
Driv, Rug, Murr, Hagger, Dagg, Rav, Hellyiefer.
Only one island has seven names for the different intensities
of rain that go into the making of its unique malt. For a
whisky so special, they call it Orkney's gold.

"The greatest all-rounder in the world of malt whisky." —Michael Jackson, Single Malt Scotch Critic



Going All Out for Chinese

*Some of the best Chinese food in
the world is being served in Los Angeles's
new Sino-suburbs*

EAST of downtown Los Angeles, just east of East L.A., where the Interstate 10 freeway careens or crawls well beyond the last breath of the ocean toward the Inland Empire, is a series of towns in the San Gabriel Valley.

This sprawl looks just like any other tentacle of the southern-California megalopolis except that here the signs for the Rite Aid drugstore, the Wal-

**by Benjamin and
Christina Schwarz**

green's, the Church of the Latter-Day Saints, and the car wash are in Chinese. Here in the wide-aisled supermarkets, alongside the Fruit Loops and the Oreos, are tanks of live geoduck and carp, pig snouts and ears and feet, and more than twenty varieties of soy sauce.

This is not a traditional Chinatown; Los Angeles has one of those, too, of course, urban and crowded, but in the

San Gabriel Valley the sidewalks aren't wet with fish entrails and the unfamiliar produce doesn't spill into the gutters. Beginning with Monterey Park and spreading into Alhambra, San Gabriel, Rosemead, San Marino, South Pasadena, Rowland Heights, Hacienda Heights, West Covina, Walnut, City of Industry, Diamond Bar, Arcadia, and Temple City, the largest concentration of Chinese in the United States lives in middle-class and upper-middle-class suburbia, a twenty-mile swath of unassuming wooden bungalows, 1970s stucco condominiums, and lushly landscaped faux-Spanish developments, shot through with commercial strips and studded with mini-malls. Here is the best Chinese food in America.

Food critics agree that Chinese and French, as Julia Child says, "are the two great cuisines of the world," and the San Gabriel Valley has what Chinese-food aficionados find elusive in the United States—real Chinese food. Unlike even

The Harbor Village, Monterey Park

the restaurants in New York's and San Francisco's Chinatowns, which are often crowded with tourists on Saturday nights, the hundreds of restaurants here feel no pressure to Americanize, because they cater almost exclusively to the area's huge population of recent immigrants from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and mainland China; Chinese-Americans who have come from all over southern California and the rest of the country; and delegations from the People's Republic of China.

Here you can encounter tastes that can be found scarcely anywhere else in the Western Hemisphere: dense, chewy hand-cut Shanxi noodles; crispy ground pork spicy with garlic and chilis and the fresh burst of cilantro on soft sesame rolls; tofu as creamy as yogurt; chicken stir-fried with whole red chilis as they do it in Szechuan, until the oil permeates the meat; wheaty "pancakes" whose delicate layers unwind in your hand; Taiwanese dried beef; gingery chicken soup in which the intensely flavored broth comes entirely from condensed steam; and sweet almond tea with beads of tapioca as big as marbles at the bottom of the glass. As a recent visitor from the People's Republic put it, the food in the San Gabriel Valley "has taste of Chinese."

THE San Gabriel Valley didn't become "China Valley" spontaneously. In this respect the area resembles much of the rest of Los Angeles, which didn't evolve so much as it was invented, taking the form willed by particular men—usually real-estate developers. In 1970, two years before a developer named Fred-eric Hsieh bought his first property in Monterey Park, that city was about 50 percent Caucasian, 34 percent Hispanic, and 15 percent Asian, with the majority of the Asians being Japanese—though among the recent arrivals were a few young Chinese professionals like Hsieh. Monterey Park was perceived as a community for those who had modestly made it, a place like lots of other Los Angeles suburbs where a family could buy a quiet, relatively inexpensive home close to the freeways and downtown. But Hsieh, who continued to buy and develop property in Monterey Park, imagined something much more ambitious. In 1977 he announced to the town's incredulous Chamber of Commerce, "You may not know it, but [Monterey Park] will

serve as the mecca for Chinese business."

Hsieh understood that many Chinese with capital to invest were poised to come to America, for the 1965 Immigration Act had dramatically increased the yearly immigration quota from the People's Republic of China and Taiwan to the United States. Because of political instability on Taiwan, the increasingly wealthy population there was a large potential immigrant pool, particularly after 1982, when, Taiwan having relaxed its emigration laws, the United States gave that country its own significant quota. The task Hsieh set for himself was to divert this stream from the traditional U.S. destinations for Chinese immigrants—San Francisco and New York—to suburban Los Angeles. Using an attractive translation of "Monterey Park"—Mengteli Gongyuan, meaning "Lush, Very Green Park"—Hsieh aggressively marketed the city in Taiwan and Hong Kong as the "Chinese Beverly Hills," promoting its school systems, its proximity to downtown, and its good weather. The campaign worked, drawing hundreds of thousands of Chinese, overwhelmingly from Taiwan, to the area that soon became known as "Little Taipei." Today Monterey Park, with a population that is 60 percent Asian, has a higher concentration of Chinese than any other city in the country. And as the population has increased in number and affluence, it has spread north and east, across the San Gabriel Valley as a whole.

Many in this immigrant wave came with the resources to transform the San Gabriel Valley in just the way Hsieh had anticipated. "First it was the real-estate people, and then trading companies, heavy investors, people that come with hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash," a longtime Monterey Park resident explained to *Forbes* in 1985. So much money poured into the city that tire stores, veterinary hospitals, and dough-nut shops were converted into banks. Greater Los Angeles became the largest Chinese business center in North America, and now the San Gabriel Valley is both one of the engines of the southern-California economy and a base for Taiwanese and Hong Kong businesses to expand to other parts of the continent.

Although not all immigrants to the San Gabriel Valley are flush with cash, as a group they are very different from the proletarian work force that lives in,

say, New York's Chinatown. Most are highly educated, working in health care, education, and computer technology, for instance, along with banking, real estate, and international trade. By now they have transformed not only Monterey Park but nearly the whole San Gabriel Valley into a focal point of the interdependent Pacific Rim economy, so that it attracts investment from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and mainland China (in the past four years overseas Chinese investment in Los Angeles County as a whole has approached \$1 billion) and generates capital to be reinvested and goods to be exchanged in Asia. Hsieh eventually expanded his operations across the Pacific, turning back on itself the process he helped to engender and reflecting the interconnectedness of Asia and the San Gabriel Valley.

ALL of this, obviously, has important implications for the global economy and for ethnic and class relations and political power in southern California—in fact, the San Gabriel Valley has been the subject of numerous sociological studies. We came to China Valley recently, however, not to explore weighty issues but to eat.

Stand at almost any point on Atlantic or Garvey, Valley or Garfield—the four major streets that intersect like a tick-tack-toe frame in China Valley—and you can count five, seven, eleven Chinese restaurants, from six-table storefront dumpling houses with fluorescent lights and linoleum floors to marbled and mirrored 800-seat palaces whose parking lots are stuffed with the Mercedes, Infinitis, and BMWs of customers who can afford to pay \$40 for braised goose webs with spiny sea cucumbers and \$90 for bird's-nest soup. Driving east on Valley, you pass rows of restaurants on both sides of the street, interrupted by mini-malls in which nearly every store is a restaurant. Keep going and you reach the San Gabriel Square, once a drive-in theater, now a mall the size of a city block, built of stucco to resemble a Spanish mission, with two floors of restaurants—all Chinese but one, which is Japanese. Get on the 60 Freeway and drive still farther east to the eerie outskirts of metropolitan Los Angeles, where land prices fall and strawberry fields abut railroad warehouses behind never-ending discount malls,

and just off the highway it's the same: malls filled with Chinese restaurants, across the street from more malls filled with Chinese restaurants.

In part, the sheer number of immigrants keeps the food authentic and the restaurant business thriving. The Chinese are so obsessed with food that one Chinese greeting means "Have you eaten?" Thomas Tseng, an urban planner who grew up in Rowland Heights and watched that town's commercial strip change from barber shops and bowling alleys to Chinese restaurants, explains that in Chinese culture socializing is almost impossible without food. As he puts it, "You have to have good food with good conversation." Given that the first order of business when friends and family get together is to decide where they're going to eat, it's no surprise that so many restaurants are packed every weekend. On weeknights restaurants cater to the young professionals in the San Gabriel Valley who have the proclivity and funds to eat out as often as five or six nights a week.

Because so many restaurants are packed so close together, the competition to serve the best food at the lowest prices is fierce. Restaurateurs complained in late 1995 to Shawn Hubler, of the *Los Angeles Times*, that to keep up they are forced to steal one another's chefs and managers, undercut one another's

prices, and stage, say, twenty-eight-course banquets with imported guest chefs. When they see a competitor succeed with a new enterprise or in a new location, they open a copy next door. And the informal places that one would expect to be inexpensive, in which the owner is the chef and manager, are compelled in this sea of restaurants to hold prices lower than low to compete. Six dishes at one of these restaurants, far more than enough food for four big eaters, usually costs less than \$30.

But the San Gabriel Valley owes its

stellar cuisine to more than the plethora of customers and restaurants. The same factors that make the area interesting sociologically—the predominance of immigrants from Taiwan, the population's relative wealth and continued ties to Asia, and the area's suburban character—make it unique culinarily.

"THE finest Chinese food in the world is in Taiwan," Barbara Tropp, a food writer specializing in Chinese cuisine, asserts. Nina Simonds, another

Chinese artistic forms, including gastronomic traditions, which many consider to be as essential to China's culture as its music, art, and dance.

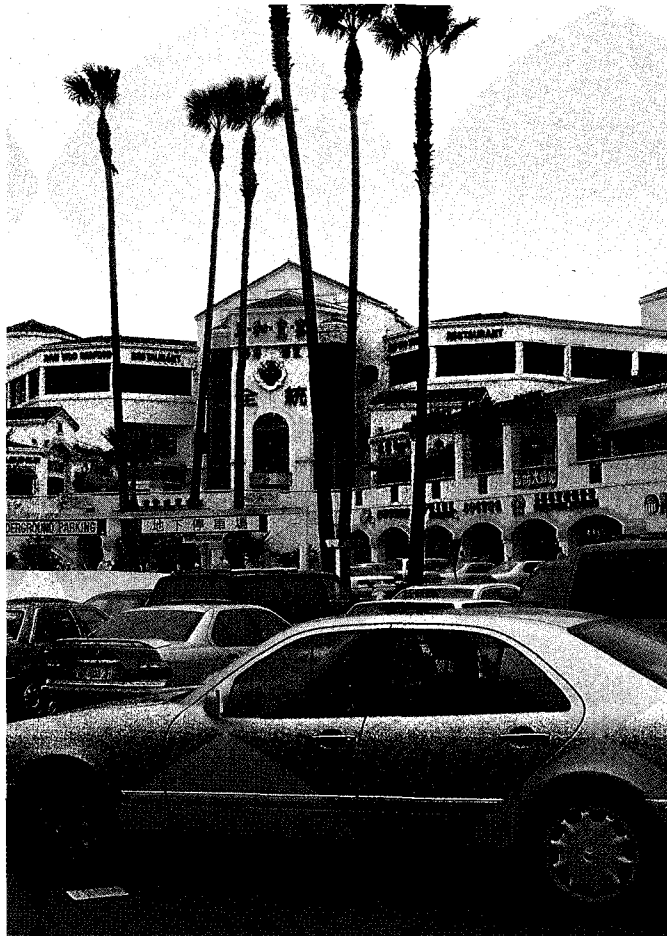
After 1949, when the Nationalists fled to Taiwan from all over the Chinese mainland, the island became a microcosm of that huge country, and its cookery came to demonstrate the glorious range of Chinese cuisine. The far-flung regions of China, each with its own distinct gastronomic style, have given rise to at least 5,000 well-established

dishes. So various is this cuisine, Julia Child told us not long ago, that she could happily eat Chinese food every night for the rest of her life. In other cultures crowding such disparate regional traditions onto one small island might have resulted in a new form altogether, a blending of styles, but, as Tropp explains, that idea is anathema to most Chinese sensibilities. Chinese expatriates saw Taiwan as a haven in which to preserve and refine China's gastronomic traditions, so that the island now boasts all the styles of the mainland in addition to its own distinct cuisine.

Immigrants have transplanted this range and refinement to the San Gabriel Valley. "It's almost as if an entire community moved intact to California," Simonds says. In the early 1970s Simonds, who lives in Massachusetts, went to Taiwan to learn Chinese cookery, but today her mentor lives in

Monterey Park. When Simonds went to visit her, the teacher took her to a restaurant whose chef, originally from Beijing, had taught Simonds how to make Peking duck.

Many San Gabriel Valley restaurateurs reinvigorate their menus by making a couple of trips a year to Hong Kong, Shanghai, Canton, and especially Taipei to identify culinary variations and refinements and to lure top chefs. These chefs find that they are simultaneously sought after by restaurants in all these cities and also those in Vancouver, San Francisco,



China, Spanish-style: San Gabriel Square

prominent Chinese-food expert, calls Taiwan a "treasure trove of cooking." The island's gastronomic distinction is in large part a reaction to the decline of cuisine on the mainland, particularly after the Communist takeover in 1949. In the People's Republic, communism's utilitarian bent first poisoned the culinary arts and then, in the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, tried to deracinate what were regarded as the insidious strains of China's former culture. Meanwhile, in Taiwan the Nationalists worked with almost religious fervor to preserve

and the San Gabriel Valley—which effectively make up a single international market. For restaurants in the valley, keeping up with Asia is essential in order to please the sophisticated local diners, who are themselves regularly jetting back to Asia and presumably eating very well there.

MOST of the giant, formal restaurants in the San Gabriel Valley are Cantonese, but this is hardly the Americanized “Cantonese” of the old-fashioned chop-suey house. Since the Szechuan and Hunan craze of the 1970s, Caucasians who want to appear sophisticated about Chinese food have looked down their noses at Cantonese restaurants, but that’s because they’ve been served too much gooey sweet-and-sour pork and have never tasted true Cantonese cooking. The Cantonese are, as the Chinese food scholar Kenneth Lo has written, “the sybarites of China so far as food is concerned,” and no other regional cooking can compare to Cantonese for “indulgence, variety and range of repertoire.” An incredible number of foods flourish in Canton’s

semitropical climate, and the Cantonese take full advantage of this abundance. (We use the term “foods” loosely—the Cantonese are justly famous for their lack of squeamishness. As the Chinese joke, the Cantonese will eat anything that flies, anything that swims, and anything that has legs except the table.)

Taoist principles call for ingredients to be eaten as close to the way they exist in nature as possible, never overcooked or overseasoned. (Chicken, for instance, is served pink at the bone, and red marrow is the mark of a well-prepared bird.) Cantonese cooking is refined, often done very quickly by steaming or stir-frying, and nearly always light. The Cantonese even favor a soy sauce less viscous and dark than that used in other regions, and their menus tend to emphasize seafood, as the walls of fish tanks in San Gabriel restaurants attest. The Cantonese, who eat five to seven little meals a day so as not to stuff themselves in the warm weather, are also, of course, famous for their dim sum, and lines wind out the doors of valley restaurants on Saturdays and Sundays for that Chinese version of brunch.

Their size may make the Cantonese places the most conspicuous restaurants in the valley, but a random sampling of some of the smaller places packed cheek by jowl along the boulevards and in the mini-malls reveals an astounding variety of cuisines. Recently immigrants from the People’s Republic and ethnic Chinese from Vietnam have added to the diversity. Probably no region of China or style of Chinese cooking is unrepresented here. There are Buddhist vegetarian restaurants, where tofu is artfully shaped to look and taste like pork, chicken, or fish. There are Taiwanese restaurants serving Japanese-influenced foods—steamed shrimp with mustard sauce, baked fish with miso, and even sushi. There are extraordinarily authentic Szechuan restaurants serving dishes that combine the numbing heat of peppercorns with the spicy heat of red chilis, like one whose name we saw translated as “spicy with spicy.”

There are Shanghai restaurants, serving the cuisine of the rich coastal provinces of Zhejiang and Jiangsu—perhaps the most sophisticated restaurants in the



Internet Access

reliable
Good things always come in 3's. **free***

With MSN™ Internet Access,

you get the speed and reliability of the latest Microsoft® Internet technology—**try it FREE* with a full month of unlimited hours!** Then if you love it, do nothing and you'll continue getting unlimited hours of MSN Internet Access and e-mail for just \$19.95/month.

MSN Internet Access uses Microsoft Internet Explorer 4 software—that's the latest, fully integrated Internet software from the people who created your Windows® operating system.

Everything you need to get started is already on your Windows 95 or 98 desktop. Just click the MSN icon on your desktop to start your FREE* month of unlimited hours right now. Or if your icon is missing, call 1-800-503-1400, dept. 0549, and we'll rush you a free CD with offer details—plus a free Microsoft software bonus pack. MSN Internet Access is part of the network of Internet services from Microsoft at MSN.com—THE place to get stuff done on the Web.

*For users of the Windows 95 or higher operating system only. Includes MSN Internet Access client access software only. One month free unlimited trial is available to new members of MSN Internet Access in the 50 United States and the District of Columbia only. A credit card is required. Local phone and/or long distance toll charges may apply. Local market network activity and capacity may affect access availability. Offer expires June 30, 1999.

©1998 Microsoft Corporation and/or its suppliers. All rights reserved. Microsoft, MSN and Windows are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries.



click or call

(If you don't see the MSN icon, click on Start. Scroll up the menu to Programs where you will find the MSN icon.)

**1-800-503-1400,
dept. 0549**

Microsoft®

San Gabriel Valley. These places eschew fierce spices, concentrating instead on bringing out the natural flavors of foods with delicate and ultra-refined seasonings, complemented by vinegar, ginger, scallions, and other aromatics. Even a dish that may taste fresh and unsiced in fact usually requires elaborate preparation: for example, the classic *xiao long bao*—dainty, bite-sized pork dumplings stuffed with a complex filling and an aspic that melts as the dumplings are steamed, ten at a time in a bamboo steamer (which even imparts its own flavor). They burst with juice in your mouth.

Shanghai restaurants also feature freshwater ingredients like those of the provinces' many rivers and lakes—crab, eel, shrimp, duck, watercress, and bamboo shoots—and incorporate more wine, sugar, and honey in their preparations than do restaurants that specialize in other regional cooking styles. They use special dark soy sauces to produce dishes like “simmered fish tails,” in which whole fish are braised in soy sauce, scallions, and ginger until they take on a coppery color and the bones dissolve.

China Valley also has Islamic restaurants, serving food introduced to Beijing by the Mongols, where customers cook paper-thin slices of lamb, glass noodles, and vegetables in communal bowls of steaming soup, dip them in sauces, and eat them with sesame cakes. And there are places that specialize in the thick, irregular noodle of the Shanxi province; places that serve Hunan honey ham; places that suffuse peppery morning-glory stems with garlic, as the ethnic Chinese do in Thailand; places where you can get soupy Fujianese dishes and translucent crepes you paint with sauce and roll around elaborate fillings, to combine more than ten tastes and textures. There are even several examples of an anomalous pan-Asian and American amalgam known as a Hong Kong coffee shop, where at 3:00 A.M. you can get dishes like shredded beef on spaghetti, thousand-year-old-egg congee, and club sandwiches.

ANNA Chi, an independent filmmaker and a casting consultant for such movies as *Nixon* and *The Joy Luck Club*, grew up in mainland China and now lives on the Westside of Los Angeles. Ironically, Chi, who was once a

leader of the Red Guard and even the subject of a Cultural Revolution poster, has an almost fanatical appreciation of Chinese food. Like many Chinese-Americans who live in southern California outside the San Gabriel Valley, she goes there twice a week or so to eat. Her Chinese friends from other parts of the United States or from the People's Republic always insist on being taken to Monterey Park, as the area is often collectively called. In this mecca of Chinese food they have been known to start early and go from restaurant to restaurant, exhausting the possibilities of an entire mini-mall.

We took the same approach when we devoted an evening with Chi to *xiao chi*, or “little eating,” restaurants, where you can get snacks or lots of different foods, simply prepared, rather than formal courses of complex dishes. We started at a Mandarin restaurant, which, like many others, has an English name, Mastro's Food, that bears no relation to its Chinese name, Three Family Village. Northern Chinese cooking relies heavily on wheat rather than rice, and works that grain to the limit, producing breads and pastas in all sorts of shapes and weights and flavors. Noodles in particular are so important that Mastro's, like most northern-style kitchens, employs a special “white-board” chef just for them. (The “red-board” chef prepares the meat.) We made a tiny dent in the array of hand-made noodles, ordering three at one sitting—“shredded,” “cat's ear,” and “wheat knot.” One came in a soup, and the other two were sautéed with a typical northern combination of garlicky pork, vegetables, and plum sauce. With our noodles we sampled what in Beijing are everyday comfort foods: spicy pork on sesame buns, looking remarkably like barbecued-pork sandwiches; cornmeal porridge; and smoky cubes of gelatinized pork skin sprinkled with raw garlic, which the Chinese munch while they drink, the way Americans eat peanuts.

Then, after devouring juicy shrimp-and-leek dumplings in the fluorescent pallor of a tiny dumpling house, we went to a place popular with late-night snackers, Lu's Garden, where a huge bowl of smooth rice congee, or porridge, studded with sweet potatoes is the centerpiece of every meal. The congee there is complemented by crunchy,

salty, and spicy side dishes—exotic leafy greens and asparagus (green vegetables always look especially lustrous in China Valley restaurants), shrimp, and a mess of teeny dried anchovies, for instance. Finally we stopped at Tung Lai Shun, a branch of a Chinese Islamic restaurant famous in Beijing (Simonds claims the branch is just as good as the original), for a loaf of sesame bread stuffed with scallions, in case we got hungry on the way home.

Twice during the evening we found ourselves seated next to delegations from the People's Republic, easily identifiable in southern California by their stiff suits. The San Gabriel Valley offers these visiting Chinese, for whom Taiwan is effectively off limits, the best opportunity to sample a greater variety of regional specialties, often prepared with fresher ingredients, than they could find in most of their home towns.

SO the good news is that a fantastic variety of terrific and authentic, not to mention well-priced, Chinese food is right there in suburban Los Angeles, seemingly as accessible as Disneyland and Universal Studios. The bad news is that you probably can't have it. The downside of a suburban Chinatown that attracts few tourists is that restaurateurs have no incentive to make their food easy for non-Chinese to order. If you've ever enviously eyed the interesting dishes that the Chinese people at the table next to you are enjoying, or pointed at one of the “specials” handwritten in Chinese and been assured by a smiling waiter that you won't like it, you understand the frustration.

Of course, we have to admit that those waiters are often right. Having spent years tracking down authentic Chinese food in holes-in-the-wall from Vancouver to Queens, we thought we were bold and sophisticated diners, but when faced with dishes like twice-cooked pig's intestine, sliced beef lung, and shredded pig's ear, we searched the menu for something that sounded more like kung pao chicken. We wouldn't have eaten nearly so well in the San Gabriel Valley if we hadn't often had Chi with us to choose the best dishes, to translate, and to insist that yes, indeed, the confused-looking Westerners fumbling with their chopsticks would like it.

One big problem is the menus. When we went to the Garvey Restaurant, where the Szechuan food was nothing like the takeout we order from the Szechuan restaurants ubiquitous in our own neighborhood, Chi examined the Chinese signs taped to the wall and chose six dishes, only one of which appeared on the English menu. Even when the names were translated into English, the terms were often meaningless (the cat's-ear noodles became "pegular" noodles, for instance) or confusing (the spicy pork on sesame buns was called "pork with seame cookied pie") or even downright unappetizing (like "noodle in gray soup").

In part, obviously, this is a problem of language. Lui Zhishun, the young owner and chef of the Garvey Restaurant, left Chongqing to come to Monterey Park only five years ago, and because he spends sixteen hours a day in the markets and at his restaurant, he has had little time to study English. Nor does he really need to learn it in a place where the bankers, the video-store clerks, the dentists, and the mechanics speak Chinese. (Zhishun's restaurant, by the way, like many of the small places in the San Gabriel Valley, had a short life. The Garvey Restaurant is now a Hong Kong-style seafood house.)

But in part, as Kevin Wu, the owner of the Royal Star (originally a branch of Monterey Park's famous Ocean Star that opened in the affluent Westside community of Santa Monica last year), laments, it is difficult to persuade Chinese restaurateurs that there's any point in making the effort to describe dishes in English with the complex and compelling detail they lavish on the Chinese menu. They're proud of a cuisine that has been continually refined over a 3,000-year history and don't really believe that Westerners can appreciate it. Even a San Gabriel Valley acquaintance of Chi's assumed that Chi had become "pretty American" after ten years in the United States, living on the Westside, and so suggested that they meet for lunch at the Monterey Park branch of Marie Callender's, the southern-California equivalent of Howard Johnson's and one of the very few non-Chinese restaurants still in the area.

ON our way to see the largest Buddhist temple in the Western Hemisphere, we stopped for gas in the eastern reaches of China Valley, where all the Spanish-style houses in the quintessential southern-California subdivisions look alike. We asked a man in a BMW at the pump next to us to recommend a restaurant in the area. "I think most of the food is too weird for you," he said. But when we assured him that we liked weird food, he was very forthcoming and directed us to a Taipei restaurant popular with Hong Kong movie stars, whose pictures are on its walls.

Wu Gee is just off the freeway in the

huge bowl of broth that roiled on the table's hot plate, six or seven plates of raw food—including bright-green leaves, thinly sliced beef, and enoki mushrooms—and little bowls of chili sauce, minced garlic, and chopped scallions, he realized that now he had to teach us how to eat the stuff. Once he had shown us that we weren't to drink the broth but rather to cook the other ingredients in it, and once he had mixed our spices and chilis and soy sauce in the proper proportions and demonstrated that we were to season our cooked foods with this, and once he had kept us from dumping all the beef into the pot at once, he invited a friend



Clockwise from left: steamed fish. Peking Duck, chicken feet.

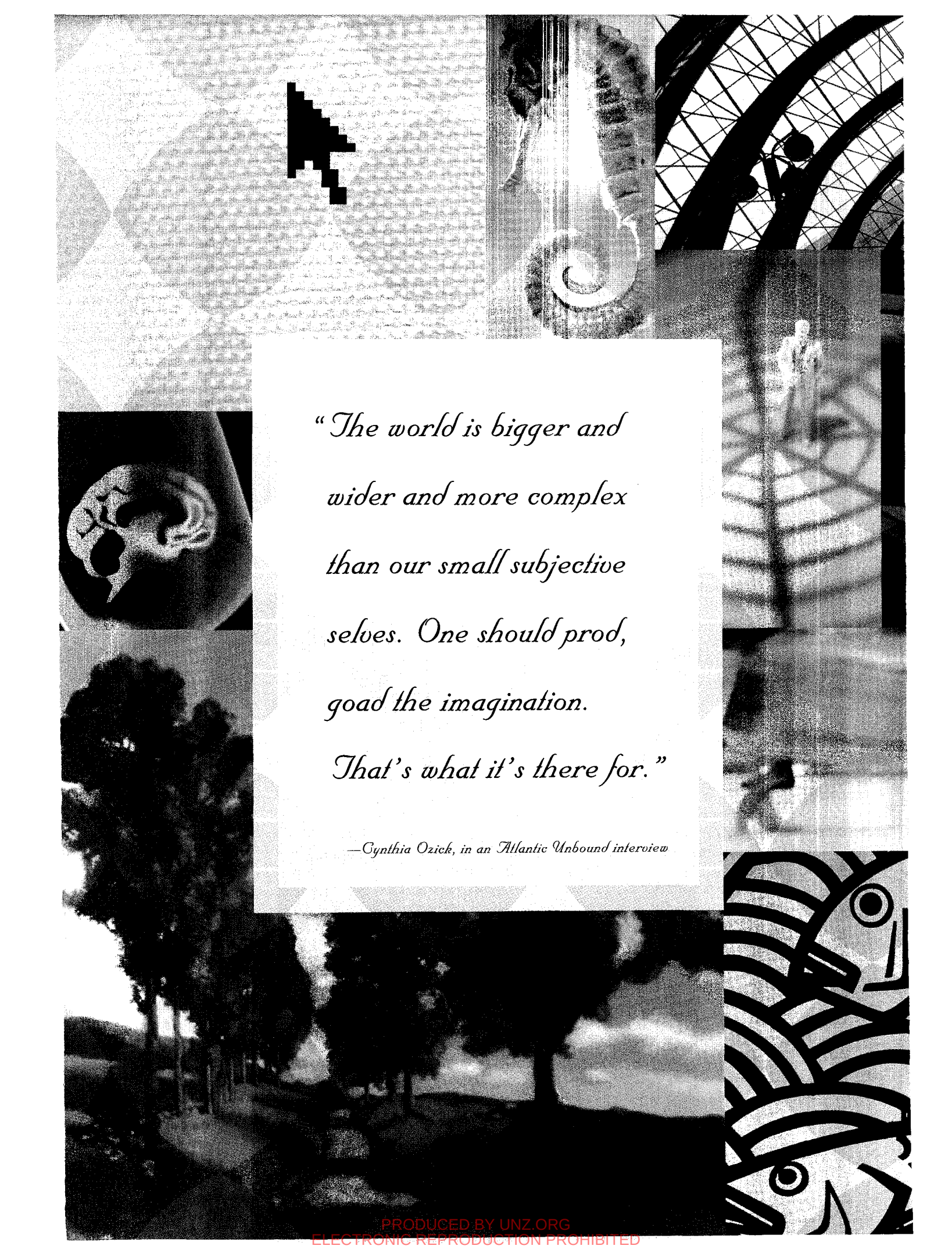
Diamond Plaza, which is full of Chinese restaurants, and only a quarter of a mile away from the Hong Kong Plaza, which is also full of Chinese restaurants, which is across the street from the Pacific Plaza, a mall in the shape of a medieval castle, which has a food court full of Chinese restaurants, which is right next door to yet another mall, this one without a name but not without Chinese restaurants.

We had never had Taiwanese fire pot before, as the waiter quickly ascertained when we tried to order what were apparently ridiculous combinations. Despite an impenetrable language barrier, the three of us finally managed to cobble together some sort of lunch he could approve. We figured the hard part was over.

But not long after he had brought us a

from the kitchen into the dining room to watch us eat.

Yes, we were a spectacle. In this case two Caucasians eating in a mall in the middle of suburbia made a very weird sight indeed. But finding the exotic amid the familiar is not an unusual experience in Los Angeles. No one can argue that much of southern California is not outwardly homogenous. Much of the population has attained the standard trappings of the American good life—the shiny car, the new house, the well-tended lawn, maybe even the pool. But as the San Gabriel Valley attests, for those who know Los Angeles, its charm is how it juxtaposes this superficial homogeneity—what some might even call sterility—with the vibrant and the strange. ☘



*"The world is bigger and
wider and more complex
than our small subjective
selves. One should prod,
goad the imagination.
That's what it's there for."*

—Cynthia Ozick, in an Atlantic Unbound interview

RY • POLITICS • DIGITAL CULTURE • TRAVELS •

There is a place

where your mind can feed and your imagination
roam—where *The Atlantic's* rich past meets
its unfolding future, where rushing ahead to
seize ideas comes as naturally as standing back
to ponder them. This is what you always knew
existed on the Web. This is a site like no other.

Atlantic Unbound

www.theatlantic.com

ARTS & CULTURE • BOOKS • FLASHBACKS • FOOD

POETRY • POLITICS • DIGITAL CULTURE

Senses of Place

*Atlantic contributors reflect on intersections
of books and travel*

Characters

I BELIEVE in reading, while I'm there, about wherever it is that I've gone. And so I have carried Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's *The Leopard* with me to Sicily, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* to Dominica, Carl Hiaasen's novels to Miami. One of the headiest blends of book and place I've ever whipped up for myself was Keri Hulme's multiple-prize-winning *The Bone People* and New Zealand, where the author lives and where the novel is set.

The tale unfolds in a craggy sea-side back of beyond on which rain seems always to be falling—as is the case in parts of the real New Zealand, alas! *The Bone People* has a worse-than-grim theme, the artful disclosure of which I won't spoil for anyone who hasn't read the book. The characters are prickly and antisocial; one in particular is monstrous. I was astonished to find myself empathizing with this person, but empathizing I was.

I read *The Bone People* on both islands of New Zealand, in rooms in hotels, motels, and lodges, and on Air New Zealand flights between one and another. The New Zealanders I met may have been eccentric, yes, but they were open and welcoming—nothing like the book's characters. A good example would be my seatmate on one flight, an octogenarian whose arm was in a cast and who couldn't stop relating that he'd dived into the water near his home every day for years and years and years, and then the other day he'd done just what he'd always done but the impact had fractured his arm, and how was that possible, how could that be? Another time when I was in the air, a flight atten-

dant, serving me a cup of tea, glanced at what I was reading. She commented on the book, favorably. We had a whole conversation about *The Bone People*.

I loved being in a land where flight attendants have the time and the inclination to chat about wrenching great literature. Everyone and everything in New Zealand seemed more complex than I had any right to expect, and I loved that about it too.

—BARBARA WALLRAFF



Illustrations by Jean Hirashima

A Real American

IT'S a strange circumstance of the arbitrary, straight-line divisions between our western states that the Four Corners area concentrates so much of the American landscape. The Navajo reservation, which overlaps all four states, offers a varied terrain of crisp mesas and deserts and pine mountains rising in winter into snow. The San Juan River flows through here, past dusty villages of trailers and stained government-built houses. The people are poor and Native American and not set up for strangers. They are in a way exotic. Even so, the region seems to me to be a celebration of the ordinary. It is accessible. It is unpretentious. More than any other single place, it seems to define an authentic United States.

This brings me to Tony Hillerman, the ex-reporter whose detective stories about the Navajo police are equally accessible and authentic. Quietly, mysteriously, without making a fuss about it, Hillerman's work captures the full sense of the Four Corners, and with it a sense of America. Any of his books will do. I take them with me to lonely or hostile parts of the world, not just for entertainment but for the grounding they provide. And I've learned that they serve the same purpose on their home turf: an activist Native American recently told me that members of his tribe give their children books by Hillerman, a white man, to encourage them to love their land. Hillerman's race doesn't matter. He pretends to write simple mysteries, but he is a master of the North American landscape. He reminds us all what we should remember about one another.

—WILLIAM LANGEWIESCHE

The Spies Who Came In From the Past

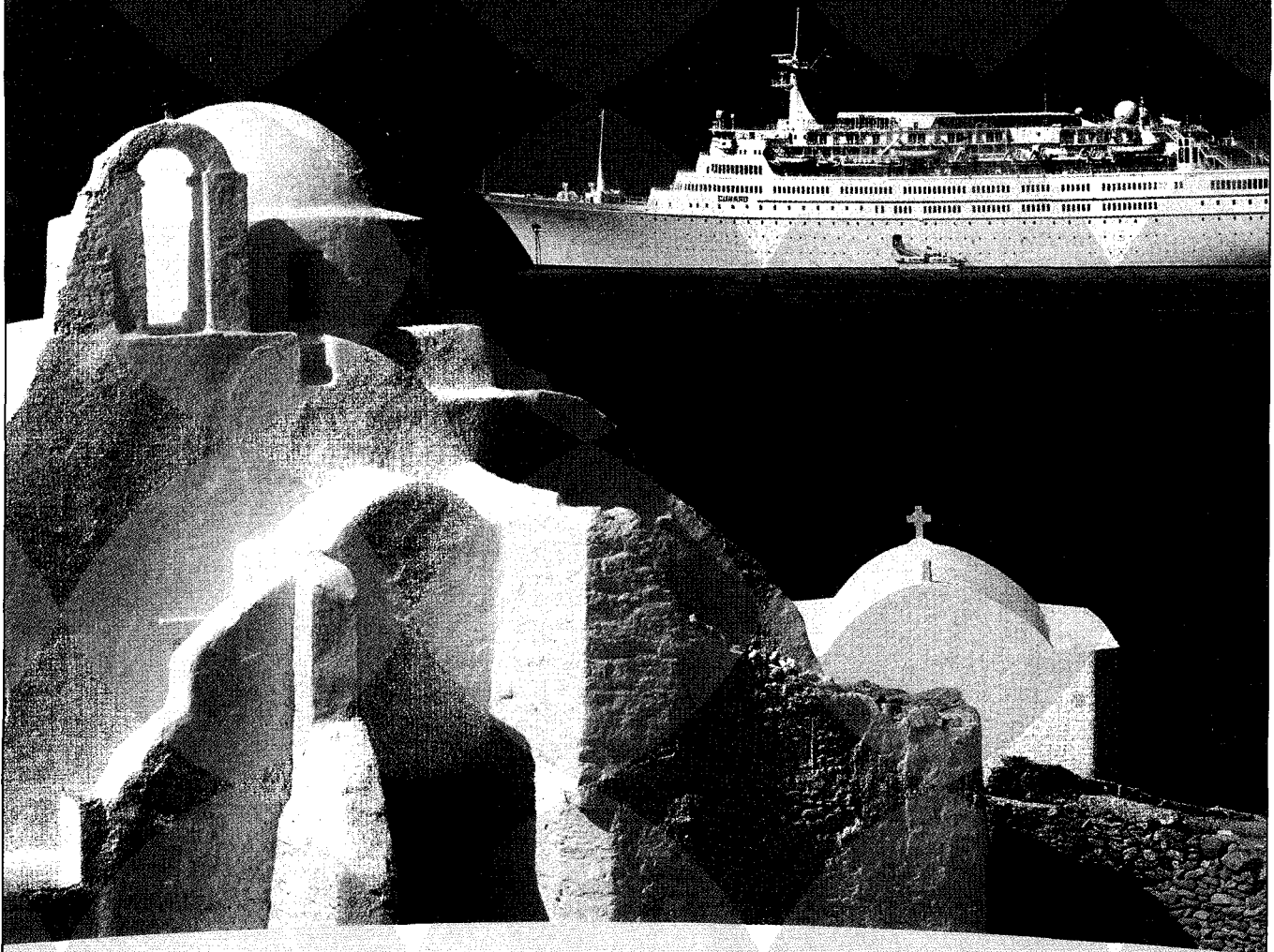
THE real Berlin can be sunny—in August even warm. But the Berlin I love in books is always dark at four-thirty on a November afternoon, chill wind on the Kurfürstendamm, everything damp, the light oily through the fog. In Brussels such

GREECE

voted

An oscar-winning journey

by cruise fans around the world.



Ask anyone who has cruised through the Mediterranean about the unforgettable joy of sailing the Ionian and Aegean seas, the beguiling beauty of the Greek islands and the thrill of exploring thousands of years of history. Come and see for yourself.

OLYMPIC
AIRWAYS
THE NATIONAL AIR CARRIER

Hellenic National Tourism Organization: Olympic Tower, 645 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022, Tel.: 212 421 5777

Hellas
GREECE:
THE AUTHENTIC CHOICE

conditions would merely be clammy. In Berlin they call up a melancholy decadence that makes the city irresistibly romantic and sad.

The wartime horror of course shapes this sense of doom and mystery, but most of the appealing Berlin literature is set just prior to or after the war. Otto Friedrich's *Before the Deluge*, a prose equivalent of George Grosz cartoons, made me want to see the remnants of the flickering Weimar-era life—the Bauhaus quarter where Walter Gropius's buildings still stand, the gritty Wedding suburb that inspired Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht, Lotte Lenya, "Mack the Knife." Thomas Berger's underappreciated series of "Reinhart" novels begins with *Crazy in Berlin*. This book, published in 1958, is much funnier than a John LeCarré novel—yet it also set the tone of cheerless, tattered Cold War spying that brought LeCarré fame five years later with *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold*. Charles McCarry's *The Secret Lovers* and *The Last Supper* use the postwar Berlin of black-market cigarettes and hasty de-Nazification to much the same literary effect. Taking the U-Bahn to the deserted Olympic stadium, I could picture Hitler watching the black American track star Jesse Owens at the 1936 Games, and also Berger's and McCarry's furtive characters of the 1950s meeting in the shadows to trade secrets.

I have not seen the city again since reading Philip Kerr's trilogy of wartime detective novels, *Berlin Noir*, or John Marks's recent novel about reunification, *The Wall*—or, for that matter, since the Wall itself came down. No doubt the reunited Berlin is a cheerier, less complex and brooding place. But I suspect that as dark falls, in the cold, the mystery is still there.

—JAMES FALLOWS

The Age of Innocence, Italian-Style

IT'S impossible to be indifferent about Gabriele D'Annunzio once you know even a little about him. He was a scoundrel—a debtor, a plagiarist, a womanizer, and a self-mythologizing megalomaniac. He was also short, bald, and ugly. During the First World War he proved to be an indefatigable fighter and

propagandist and a genuine, if loony, hero. His supernationalism, combined with his war record and literary fame, made him an all-purpose spokesman.

At the beginning of the century D'Annunzio had few rivals for the title of Italy's greatest poet; every Italian schoolchild had to memorize lines and lines of his naturalistic, sonorous verse, filled with unusual words. The bourgeoisie was



fascinated by his novel *The Innocent*, which took up the scandalous themes of adultery and infanticide and portrayed an upper-middle-class society hidebound by traditions of religion and class.

Today the writer is having something of a revival in his native country, but not for purely literary reasons: a small but vocal far-right wing is reclaiming him. D'Annunzio helped to pave the way for Mussolini, and the two men maintained a wary friendship that ended with Il Duce's keeping D'Annunzio at bay in a villa that got odder and more grandiose by the year.

Today the Vittoriale is an essential stop

for any visitor to Lake Garda, not just for its twenty-acre park and commanding views of Italy's largest lake but also for its surpassing strangeness. One room is a Turkish harem, another a study full of Indiana Jones-style relics, another a hypersexual bedroom with imposing casts of naked bodies around the bed; a bust of the owner sits above the pillow. (Every room is a monument to global egoism—one bathroom is said to contain more than 2,000 souvenirs.) In the park is a huge replica of a First World War battleship, its prow jutting from a mountainside. There's an amphitheater where concerts are held and D'Annunzio's plays are still staged, and a vast white Fascist-style mausoleum for D'Annunzio and some of his fellow war heroes.

The place is mad and maddening. John Updike set the climax of a story in the grounds of the Vittoriale, as a husband and wife commence quarreling over the poet's possible Nazi leanings (he died in 1938). At the end, during what may be only a temporary truce, the man tells his wife, "It's a tough country. Even the natives can't figure it out."

—CORBY KUMMER

Down in Green Pastures

MANY place-names in the Bible designate locations of myth or mystery—consider the Garden of Eden. But the place called Engedi, the "Spring of the Young Goat," is as identifiable and accessible as it ever was. The biblical imagery is appropriately organic. "I grew tall like a palm tree in Engedi," says the figure Wisdom in Ecclesiasticus. The poet of the Song of Songs offers a simile: "My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of En-gedi." From the oasis of Engedi, on the salty shores of the Dead Sea, a jagged canyon cuts northwest into the parched cliffs and unearthly uplands of the Judean Desert. All year round a spring-fed stream cascades down the canyon's narrow length, tumbling in chilly waterfalls or gathering strength in clear dark pools. The water sustains an improbably lush ecosystem, whose trees and ferns and flowers create a gash of cool green amid the arid emptiness.

The canyon system at En-gedi lies about twenty miles south of Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, and about ten miles north of the ancient stronghold at Masada. The canyons have been set aside as a nature preserve, and some of the trails at midday are heavily traveled. Go in the early morning, as the sun rises over the bare Mountains of Moab, on the far side of the Dead Sea. Ibex and oryx will scatter at your approach, loping to higher ground as you wind among the arching papyrus reeds. At various points the canyon walls rise 1,600 feet high. Perhaps half a mile from the trailhead a thin waterfall beckons—but you may wish to defer the experience of it, for the trails continue, defining hikes of two hours, or five hours, or seven. You will encounter ruins along the way, some going back more than 5,000 years, to before the Israelites.

According to the first Book of Samuel, here, in the canyon, the young David hid from the wrath of his vengeful King: "When Saul returned from following the Philistines, he was told, 'Behold, David is in the wilderness of En-gedi.' Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men in front of the Wild-goats' Rocks." The watercourse is called Nahal David, or "David's Stream." As Saul slept in a cave above it, David cut a piece of fabric from Saul's tunic, to show that he could have killed the King, had he so wished. Thereupon Saul begged forgiveness, and took his men away. David remained behind.

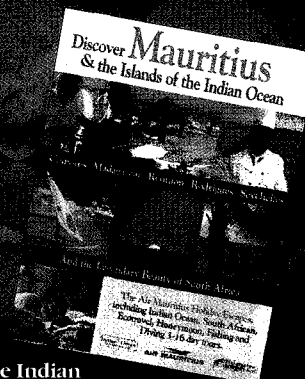
Any visitor would understand why.

—CULLEN MURPHY

Whose House This Is

HIGH up outside Franconia, New Hampshire, a rather ordinary white farmhouse stands back a little from the road, as though too shy to press forward to the view that opens across the way, down declivities of pasture and out to the west. Here for five of his most productive years, from 1915 to 1920, Robert Frost lived with his family after returning from his discovery of England—and England's discovery of him. Here his children began to come of age, and here he felt able to take his stance as an American poet, with a modicum

Discover Mauritius the exotic island paradise of the Indian Ocean that Mark Twain claimed was "modeled after Heaven." A tropical getaway with miles of sun-drenched beaches, coral reefs, colorful markets and fabulous resorts.



For our brochure on tours to Mauritius, Madagascar, the Seychelles and the islands of the Indian Ocean, use the reader service card or call us at 1-800-537-1182.

Airline to the islands of the Indian Ocean
Air Mauritius 560 Sylvan Avenue, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632 (201) 871-8381

Michel Perchin™

Monogram
Limited Edition
1000 pieces



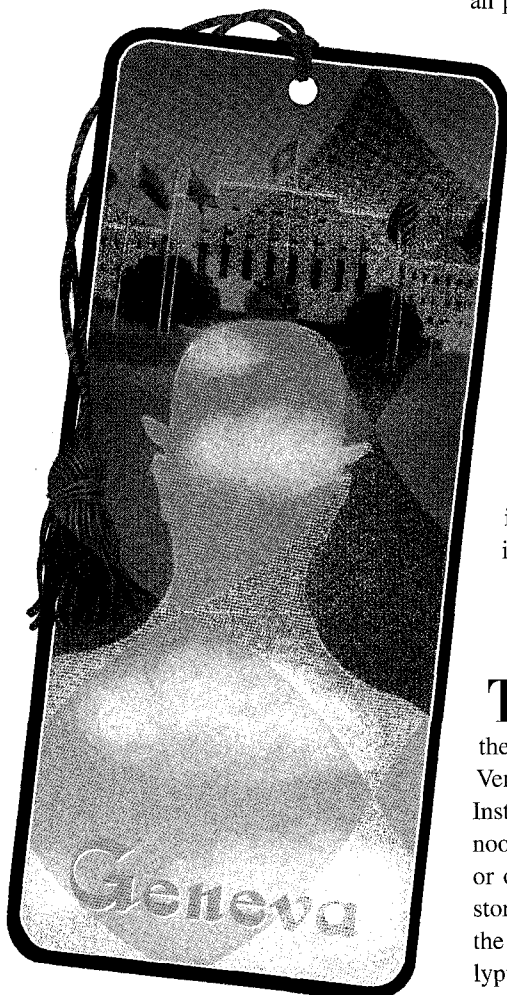
cellini NYC

HOTEL WALDORF ASTORIA PARK AVENUE AT 42ND STREET • NEW YORK, NY 10017 • TEL 212 974 1000 • 500 MADISON AVENUE AT 50TH STREET • NEW YORK, NY 10022 • 212 693 6000
FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA: @CELLINI_NYC • #CELLINI_NYC • VISIT US AT: WWW.CELLINI-NYC.COM

of American support. Here he sat in his favorite Morris chair, carving out poems in his stubby handwriting with a broad-nibbed pen.

Some twenty years ago the town of Franconia bought the house from the people who had bought it from the people who had bought it from Frost, and it once again became a residence for poets. It was dedicated with some ceremony in 1977 by Senator Edward Kennedy, of Massachusetts, with a plane-ful of his relatives in attendance, and a little nature trail was opened in back of the house, each stop along the way a sort of icon illustrating in the natural world one of Frost's poems—"After Apple-Picking," say, or "Rose Pogonias." In due course the residence became more inclusive, and now the house and barn, supported by Frost's lifetime publishers, Henry Holt and Company, spend each summer open to writing classes and visitors to the Frost heritage. It's a place worth seeing and remarking on: out of such plainness enormous views can be seized.

—PETER DAVISON



Heart of Starkness

GENEVA is a glaciated Paris. Here the mechanics of banking, diplomacy, and sophisticated bourgeois living have asphyxiated passion. The silvery blue of Lake Lemman suggests money and oblivion. Geneva: I think of Calvinism and gray stones and too many jewelry shops. Despite the bracing winds and the swans, Lake Lemman seems but another enclosure. The wrought iron, the pollarded trees, the conical hedges, the crystalline dawn haze where Lake Lemman meets the Rhone, the Gothic monuments and gabled roofs, the marble fireplaces and the valences in my hotel room—all are exquisite, but it is an austere and hollow beauty. Joseph Conrad called Geneva "the very perfection of mediocrity." In *Under Western Eyes*, Conrad's 1911 novel set partly in Geneva, the Swiss city serves as a counterpoint to the expatriate Russian anarchists whom his tale is about.

Geneva's cold, angular streets are even now backdrops to murky, Conradian plots. Here are secret bank accounts and whole armies of diplomats. And every manner of political group—good, bad, or merely self-righteous—does business here. The heated politics of Russia and other troubled regions fill Geneva's emotional vacuum. Because Geneva is such a monument to order and perfection, officials from poor countries find it attractive. This is a city that people pass through. I walk into a luxurious tea salon off a narrow umber street. It is filled with whispering. I think of Conrad's irrational terrorists imagining revolution in Russia. Geneva is immensely stimulating.

—ROBERT D. KAPLAN

Paradise Found

TO understand the original lure of the southern-California good life, forget Venice Beach and ignore Beverly Hills. Instead take a drive on an October afternoon when the Santa Anas are blowing, or on a February morning after a rainstorm. The sky will be a flawless blue; the various greens of the palm, the eucalyptus, and the ficus will shimmer in the

sun; and everything you see will stand out sharp and clean in the brilliant but never harsh light. Head for Pasadena, unglamorous Glendale, Alhambra, Altadena, Culver City, Los Feliz, the Hollywood flats, the mid-Wilshire area, or the modest "alphabet streets" of Pacific Palisades, where the once-ubiquitous California bungalows of the early 1900s and their successors, the Spanish-style ones of the twenties and thirties, still prevail. These tidy, stylish, airy, (originally) inexpensive houses, which seem to flow into their lush gardens, were built for the lower-middle-class transplanted midwesterners who long defined the city culturally, socially, and economically. The bungalows are, as two prominent architectural historians put it, "the closest thing to a democratic art that has ever been produced."

The great realistic novel of Los Angeles, and the only one to take seriously the concerns and aspirations of what Frank Lloyd Wright derisively called "the commonplace people" who filled these bungalows and the city, is James M. Cain's *Mildred Pierce*. With cumulative detail Cain re-created the intricate, ordinary lives of small entrepreneurs, real-estate agents, waitresses, and next-door neighbors. Los Angeles is now, famously, among the world's most ethnically diverse metropolises, but Cain and this architecture tour reveal its earlier incarnation, as America's most bourgeois, homogenous Anglo-Saxon big city. In what critics dismissed as a "huge country village," the veterans of bleak prairie winters found a place that in their earnest wonderment they called a "Paradise on Earth," where they rapturously grew in their own back yards the oranges, lemons, figs, nectarines, and pomegranates that were rare treats in groceries back home.

Usually belittled as bland sun seekers, these people seem to me grim realists who understood that because life was mostly loss and disappointment, small consolations should be gratefully savored. Today, for all their complaining, Angelenos have the same sense of gratitude when, after flying home from a trip to the East or the Midwest in January, they hungrily roll down the windows of the cab to smell the jasmine and feel the soft night air.

—BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

"For most of the last 30 years, the United States and the rest of the world has been preoccupied by inflation . . . But clearly the balance of risks has now shifted."

—PRESIDENT CLINTON,
SPEAKING TO THE COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

"The problem is that both Japan and the rest of Asia are suffering from spreading deflation . . . in which revenues, prices, and production are falling in response to a collapse in demand . . ."

—THE NEW YORK TIMES

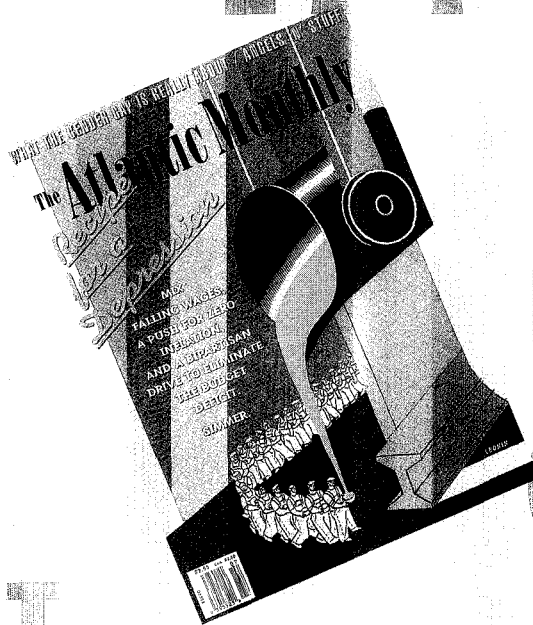
The Atlantic Monthly

*Subscribe to The Atlantic Monthly
for \$14.95—just \$1.25 an issue.*

Call Today:

1-800-283-2004

ORDERS ONLY, PLEASE. ORDER CODE: SA3



The Atlantic Monthly was warning of the risks and consequences of global deflation two years ago, when the Asian economies now in free fall were still tigers; when President Clinton was running for re-election on a resurgent American economy built on a thriving export sector; when triumphalist rhetoric was widespread about the superiority of the free-market economy, including unregulated global currency markets; and when the word “deflation” had an unfamiliar ring. In our July, 1996, issue Thomas Palley, then an economics professor at the New School for Social Research, and Robert A. Levine, a Rand Corporation economist and former economic policy-maker, sketched a scenario in which the deflationary policies of the Federal Reserve and the International Monetary Fund, along with falling global prices and wages brought on, in part, by changes in international financial markets, could precipitate a severe economic crisis. The article was ominous—and clairvoyant. Analytical prescience is the *Atlantic* edge: history, understood as the direction or logic of events, not the “news,” is our beat.

Tread luxuriously.



Tread lightly *and* luxuriously in Lincoln Navigator, the most powerful luxury SUV on the continent. Tread spaciously, too. Navigator has room for seven in three rows of leather-trimmed seats. Call 1 800 446-8888, visit www.lincolnvehicles.com or see an authorized Lincoln Navigator dealer.



Lincoln Navigator. What a luxury [

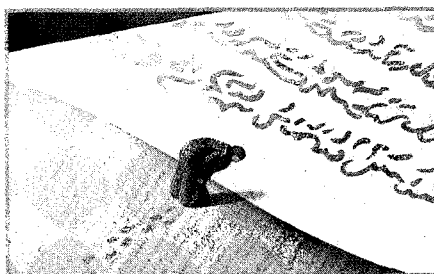


] should be.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What Is the Koran?

by TOBY LESTER



Researchers with a variety of academic and theological interests are proposing controversial theories about the Koran and Islamic history, and are striving to reinterpret Islam for the modern world. This is, as one scholar puts it, a “sensitive business”

IN 1972, during the restoration of the Great Mosque of Sana’a, in Yemen, laborers working in a loft between the structure’s inner and outer roofs stumbled across a remarkable gravesite, although they did not realize it at the time. Their ignorance was excusable: mosques do not normally house graves, and this site contained no tombstones, no human remains, no funereal jewelry. It contained nothing more, in fact, than an unappealing mash of old parchment and paper documents—damaged books and individual pages of Arabic text, fused together by centuries of rain and dampness, gnawed into over the years by rats and insects. Intent on completing the task at hand, the laborers gathered up the manuscripts, pressed them into some twenty potato sacks, and set them aside on the staircase of one of the mosque’s minarets, where they were locked away—and where they would probably have been forgotten once again, were it not for Qadhi Isma’il al-Akwa’, then the president of the Yemeni Antiquities Authority, who realized the potential importance of the find.

Al-Akwa’ sought international assistance in examining and preserving the fragments, and in 1979 managed to interest a visiting German scholar, who in turn persuaded the German government to organize and fund a restoration project. Soon after the project began, it became clear that the hoard was a fabulous example of what is sometimes referred to as a “paper grave”—in this case the resting place for, among other things,

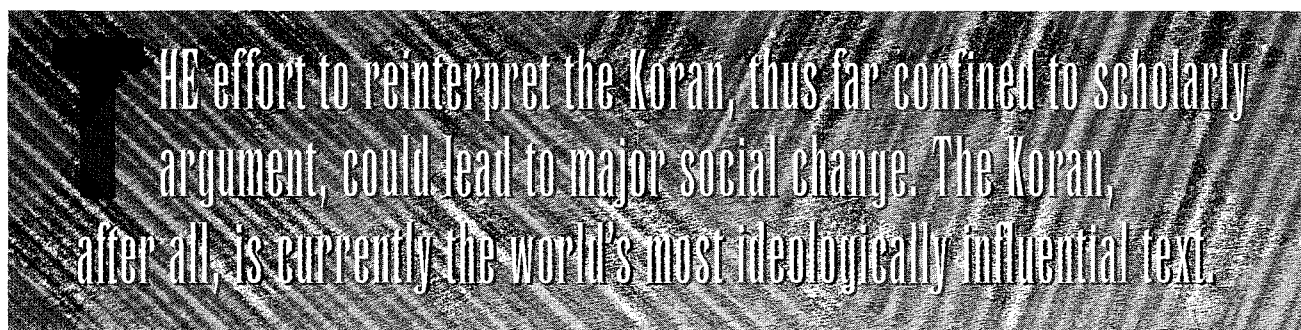
tens of thousands of fragments from close to a thousand different parchment codices of the Koran, the Muslim holy scripture. In some pious Muslim circles it is held that worn-out or damaged copies of the Koran must be removed from circulation; hence the idea of a grave, which both preserves the sanctity of the texts being laid to rest and ensures that only complete and unblemished editions of the scripture will be read.

Some of the parchment pages in the Yemeni hoard seemed to date back to the seventh and eighth centuries A.D., or Islam's first two centuries—they were fragments, in other words, of perhaps the oldest Korans in existence. What's more, some of these fragments revealed small but intriguing aberrations from the standard Koranic text. Such aberrations, though not surprising to textual historians, are troublingly at odds with the orthodox Muslim belief that the Koran as it has reached us today is quite simply the perfect, timeless, and unchanging Word of God.

The mainly secular effort to reinterpret the Koran—in part based on textual evidence such as that provided by the

over even earlier, washed-off versions. What the Yemeni Korans seemed to suggest, Puin began to feel, was an *evolving* text rather than simply the Word of God as revealed in its entirety to the Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century A.D.

Since the early 1980s more than 15,000 sheets of the Yemeni Korans have painstakingly been flattened, cleaned, treated, sorted, and assembled; they now sit ("preserved for another thousand years," Puin says) in Yemen's House of Manuscripts, awaiting detailed examination. That is something the Yemeni authorities have seemed reluctant to allow, however. "They want to keep this thing low-profile, as we do too, although for different reasons," Puin explains. "They



Yemeni fragments—is disturbing and offensive to many Muslims, just as attempts to reinterpret the Bible and the life of Jesus are disturbing and offensive to many conservative Christians. Nevertheless, there are scholars, Muslims among them, who feel that such an effort, which amounts essentially to placing the Koran in history, will provide fuel for an Islamic revival of sorts—a reappropriation of tradition, a going forward by looking back. Thus far confined to scholarly argument, this sort of thinking can be nonetheless very powerful and—as the histories of the Renaissance and the Reformation demonstrate—can lead to major social change. The Koran, after all, is currently the world's most ideologically influential text.

Looking at the Fragments

THE first person to spend a significant amount of time examining the Yemeni fragments, in 1981, was Gerd-R. Puin, a specialist in Arabic calligraphy and Koranic paleography based at Saarland University, in Saarbrücken, Germany. Puin, who had been sent by the German government to organize and oversee the restoration project, recognized the antiquity of some of the parchment fragments, and his preliminary inspection also revealed unconventional verse orderings, minor textual variations, and rare styles of orthography and artistic embellishment. Enticing, too, were the sheets of the scripture written in the rare and early Hijazi Arabic script: pieces of the earliest Korans known to exist, they were also palimpsests—versions very clearly written

don't want attention drawn to the fact that there are Germans and others working on the Korans. They don't want it made public that there is work being done *at all*, since the Muslim position is that everything that needs to be said about the Koran's history was said a thousand years ago."

To date just two scholars have been granted extensive access to the Yemeni fragments: Puin and his colleague H.-C. Graf von Bothmer, an Islamic-art historian also based at Saarland University. Puin and Von Bothmer have published only a few tantalizingly brief articles in scholarly publications on what they have discovered in the Yemeni fragments. They have been reluctant to publish partly because until recently they were more concerned with sorting and classifying the fragments than with systematically examining them, and partly because they felt that the Yemeni authorities, if they realized the possible implications of the discovery, might refuse them further access. Von Bothmer, however, in 1997 finished taking more than 35,000 microfilm pictures of the fragments, and has recently brought the pictures back to Germany. This means that soon Von Bothmer, Puin, and other scholars will finally have a chance to scrutinize the texts and to publish their findings freely—a prospect that thrills Puin. "So many Muslims have this belief that everything between the two covers of the Koran is just God's unaltered word," he says. "They like to quote the textual work that shows that the Bible has a history and did not fall straight out of the sky, but until now the Koran has been out of this discussion. The only way to break through this wall is to prove that the Koran has a history too. The Sana'a fragments will help us to do this."

Puin is not alone in his enthusiasm. "The impact of the Yemeni manuscripts is still to be felt," says Andrew Rippin, a professor of religious studies at the University of Calgary, who is at the forefront of Koranic studies today. "Their variant readings and verse orders are all very significant. Everybody agrees on that. These manuscripts say that the early history of the Koranic text is much more of an open question than many have suspected: the text was less stable, and therefore had less authority, than has always been claimed."

Copyediting God

BY the standards of contemporary biblical scholarship, most of the questions being posed by scholars like Puin and Rippin are rather modest; outside an Islamic context, proposing that the Koran has a history and suggesting that it can be interpreted metaphorically are not radical steps. But the Islamic context—and Muslim sensibilities—cannot be ignored. "To historicize the Koran would in effect delegitimize the whole historical experience of the Muslim community," says R. Stephen Humphreys, a professor of Islamic studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara. "The Koran is the charter for the community, the document that called it into existence. And ideally—though obviously not always in reality—Islamic history has been the effort to pursue and work out the commandments of the Koran in human life. If the Koran is a historical document, then the whole Islamic struggle of fourteen centuries is effectively meaningless."

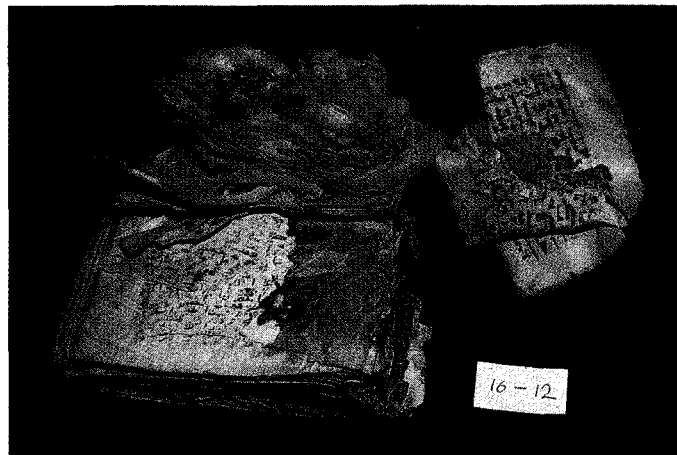
The orthodox Muslim view of the Koran as self-evidently the Word of God, perfect and inimitable in message, language, style, and form, is strikingly similar to the fundamentalist Christian notion of the Bible's "inerrancy" and "verbal inspiration" that is still common in many places today. The notion was given classic expression only a little more than a century ago by the biblical scholar John William Burgon.

The Bible is none other than *the voice of Him that sitteth upon the Throne!* Every Book of it, every Chapter of it, every Verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it . . . every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High!

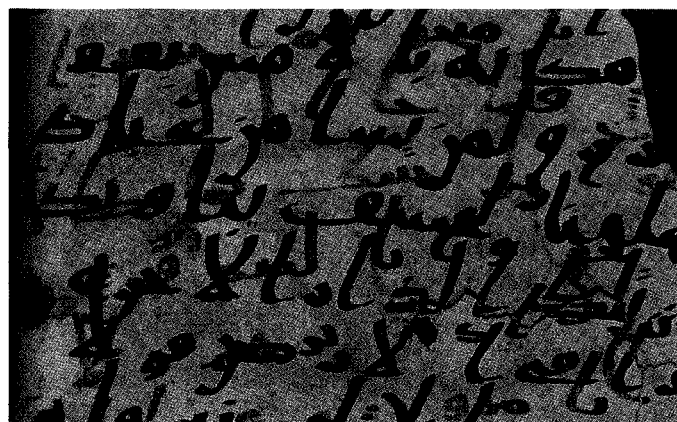
Not all the Christians think this way about the Bible, however, and in fact, as the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1981) points out, "the closest analogue in Christian belief to the role of the Kur'ān in Muslim belief is not the Bible, but Christ." If Christ is the Word of God made flesh, the Koran is the Word of God made text, and questioning its sanctity or authority is thus considered an outright attack on Islam—as Salman Rushdie knows all too well.

The prospect of a Muslim backlash has not deterred the critical-historical study of the Koran, as the existence of the essays in *The Origins of the Koran* (1998) demonstrate. Even in the aftermath of the Rushdie affair the work contin-

ues: In 1996 the Koranic scholar Günter Lüling wrote in *The Journal of Higher Criticism* about "the wide extent to which both the text of the Koran and the learned Islamic account of Islamic origins have been distorted, a deformation unsuspectingly accepted by Western Islamicists until now." In 1994 the journal *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* published a posthumous study by Yehuda D. Nevo, of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, detailing seventh- and eighth-century religious inscriptions on stones in the Negev Desert which, Nevo suggested, pose "considerable problems for the traditional Muslim account of the history of Islam." That same year, and in the same journal, Patricia Crone, a



BELOW: GERD R. PUIN; ABOVE: URSULA DREIBHOLZ

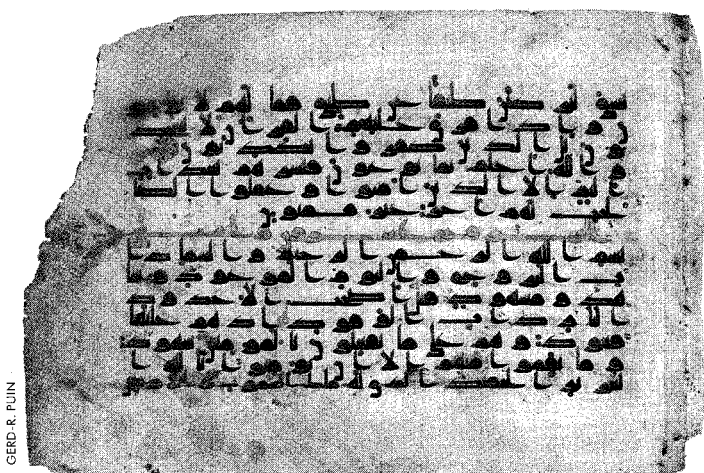


TOP: YEMENI KORAN FRAGMENTS, AS THEY WERE FOUND IN 1972. BOTTOM: A PAGE FROM PERHAPS THE WORLD'S OLDEST EXTANT KORAN, FROM BEFORE 750 A.D. ULTRAVIOLET LIGHT REVEALS EVEN EARLIER KORANIC WRITING UNDERNEATH

historian of early Islam currently based at the Institute for Advanced Study, in Princeton, New Jersey, published an article in which she argued that elucidating problematic passages in the Koranic text is likely to be made possible only by "abandoning the conventional account of how the Qur'an was born." And since 1991 James Bellamy, of the University of Michigan, has proposed in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* a series of "emendations to the text of

the Koran”—changes that from the orthodox Muslim perspective amount to copyediting God.

Crone is one of the most iconoclastic of these scholars. During the 1970s and 1980s she wrote and collaborated on several books—most notoriously, with Michael Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (1977)—that made radical arguments about the origins of Islam and the writing of Islamic history. Among *Hagarism's* controversial claims were suggestions that the text of the Koran came into being later than is now believed (“There is no hard evidence for the existence of the Koran in any form before the last decade of the seventh century”); that Mecca was not the ini-



FROM THE YEMENI HOARD: PROBABLY A NINTH- OR TENTH-CENTURY KORAN

tial Islamic sanctuary (“[the evidence] points unambiguously to a sanctuary in north-west Arabia . . . Mecca was secondary”); that the Arab conquests preceded the institutionalization of Islam (“the Jewish messianic fantasy was enacted in the form of an Arab conquest of the Holy Land”); that the idea of the *hijra*, or the migration of Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622, may have evolved long after Muhammad died (“No seventh-century source identifies the Arab era as that of the *hijra*”); and that the term “Muslim” was not commonly used in early Islam (“There is no good reason to suppose that the bearers of this primitive identity called themselves ‘Muslims’ [but] sources do . . . reveal an earlier designation of the community [which] appears in Greek as ‘Magaritai’ in a papyrus of 642, and in Syriac as ‘Mahgre’ or ‘Mahgraye’ from as early as the 640s”).

Hagarism came under immediate attack, from Muslim and non-Muslim scholars alike, for its heavy reliance on hostile sources. (“This is a book,” the authors wrote, “based on what from any Muslim perspective must appear an inordinate regard for the testimony of infidel sources.”) Crone and Cook have since backed away from some of its most radical propositions—such as, for example, that the Prophet

Muhammad lived two years longer than the Muslim tradition claims he did, and that the historicity of his migration to Medina is questionable. But Crone has continued to challenge both Muslim and Western orthodox views of Islamic history. In *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (1987) she made a detailed argument challenging the prevailing view among Western (and some Muslim) scholars that Islam arose in response to the Arabian spice trade.

Gerd-R. Puin’s current thinking about the Koran’s history partakes of this contemporary revisionism. “My idea is that the Koran is a kind of cocktail of texts that were not all understood even at the time of Muhammad,” he says. “Many of them may even be a hundred years older than Islam itself. Even within the Islamic traditions there is a huge body of contradictory information, including a significant Christian substrate; one can derive a whole Islamic *anti-history* from them if one wants.”

Patricia Crone defends the goals of this sort of thinking. “The Koran is a scripture with a history like any other—except that we don’t know this history and tend to provoke howls of protest when we study it. Nobody would mind the howls if they came from Westerners, but Westerners feel deferral when the howls come from other people: who are you to tamper with *their* legacy? But we Islamicists are not trying to destroy anyone’s faith.”

Not everyone agrees with that assessment—especially since Western Koranic scholarship has traditionally taken place in the context of an openly declared hostility between Christianity and Islam. (Indeed, the broad movement in the West over the past two centuries to “explain” the East, often referred to as Orientalism, has in recent years come under fire for exhibiting similar religious and cultural biases.) The Koran has seemed, for Christian and Jewish scholars particularly, to possess an aura of heresy; the nineteenth-century Orientalist William Muir, for example, contended that the Koran was one of “the most stubborn enemies of Civilisation, Liberty, and the Truth which the world has yet known.” Early Soviet scholars, too, undertook an ideologically motivated study of Islam’s origins, with almost missionary zeal: in the 1920s and in 1930 a Soviet publication titled *Ateist* ran a series of articles explaining the rise of Islam in Marxist-Leninist terms. In *Islam and Russia* (1956), Ann K.S. Lambton summarized much of this work, and wrote that several Soviet scholars had theorized that “the motive force of the nascent religion was supplied by the mercantile bourgeoisie of Mecca and Medina”; that a certain S.P. Tolstov had held that “Islam was a social-religious movement originating in the slave-owning, not feudal, form of Arab society”; and that N.A. Morozov had argued that “until the Crusades Islam was indistinguishable from Judaism and . . . only then did it receive its independent character, while Muhammad and the first Caliphs are mythical figures.” Morozov appears to have been a particularly flamboyant theorist: Lambton wrote that

SPANISH

For Children Whose Parents Know:

**Learning a Language is
Easiest from Birth to Age 12.**

**Early
Advantage™**
LLC

If you've read the recent reports in TIME or seen NBC's DATELINE, you know your child's natural gift for learning languages is greater today than it ever will be again. Learning a second or even third language is easiest from birth to about age 10 or 12. That's why the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) created MUZZY® - to give youngsters an early advantage learning **Spanish, French, German, or Italian.**

Four story videos, a powerful vocabulary building video, two audio cassettes, a script book, two parents' guides, and a brand new bonus CD-ROM combine to create the total environment of a second language. So your child can learn naturally.

MUZZY is fast. It's fun. And it works! Winner of the Parents' Choice Award and top European honors, MUZZY is yours for just \$33.80 a month for five months, charged to your credit card, plus shipping.

Try MUZZY Risk Free for 30 days.

If you're not completely delighted, return the program for a full refund. We're certain you will be delighted, just as hundreds of thousands of parents and teachers are worldwide.

What Newsweek calls your child's "Window of Opportunity," is wide open right now. Please don't turn the page and let it slowly close.

Call Now: 1-888-248-0480

THE **BBC** LANGUAGE COURSE FOR CHILDREN

YES: Please send me MUZZY. For each course ordered, charge my credit card \$33.80 a month for 5 months. Charge me \$9.50 shipping/handling with the first installment. Thirty-day return privilege. Satisfaction guaranteed.

Spanish _____ French _____
QTY QTY

German _____ Italian _____
QTY QTY

Name _____
PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express

Card No. _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____
SUBJECT TO ACCEPTANCE

☐ Enclosed is my check for \$178.50 (\$169+\$9.50) payable to Early Advantage for each program I order. (CT Residents add 6% Sales Tax.)
30-Day money-back guarantee.

Code 99-0010

Early Advantage, 25 Ford Road, Westport, CT 06880 1-888-248-0480 www.early-advantage.com

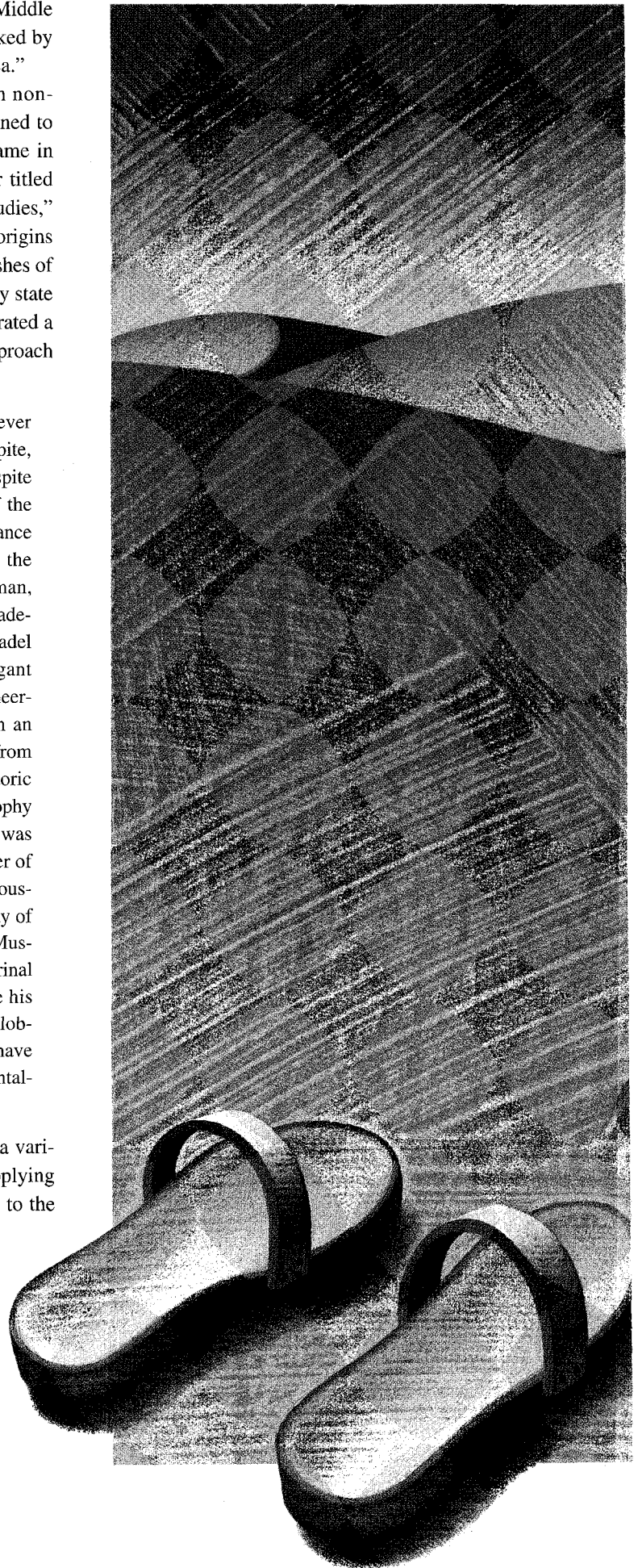


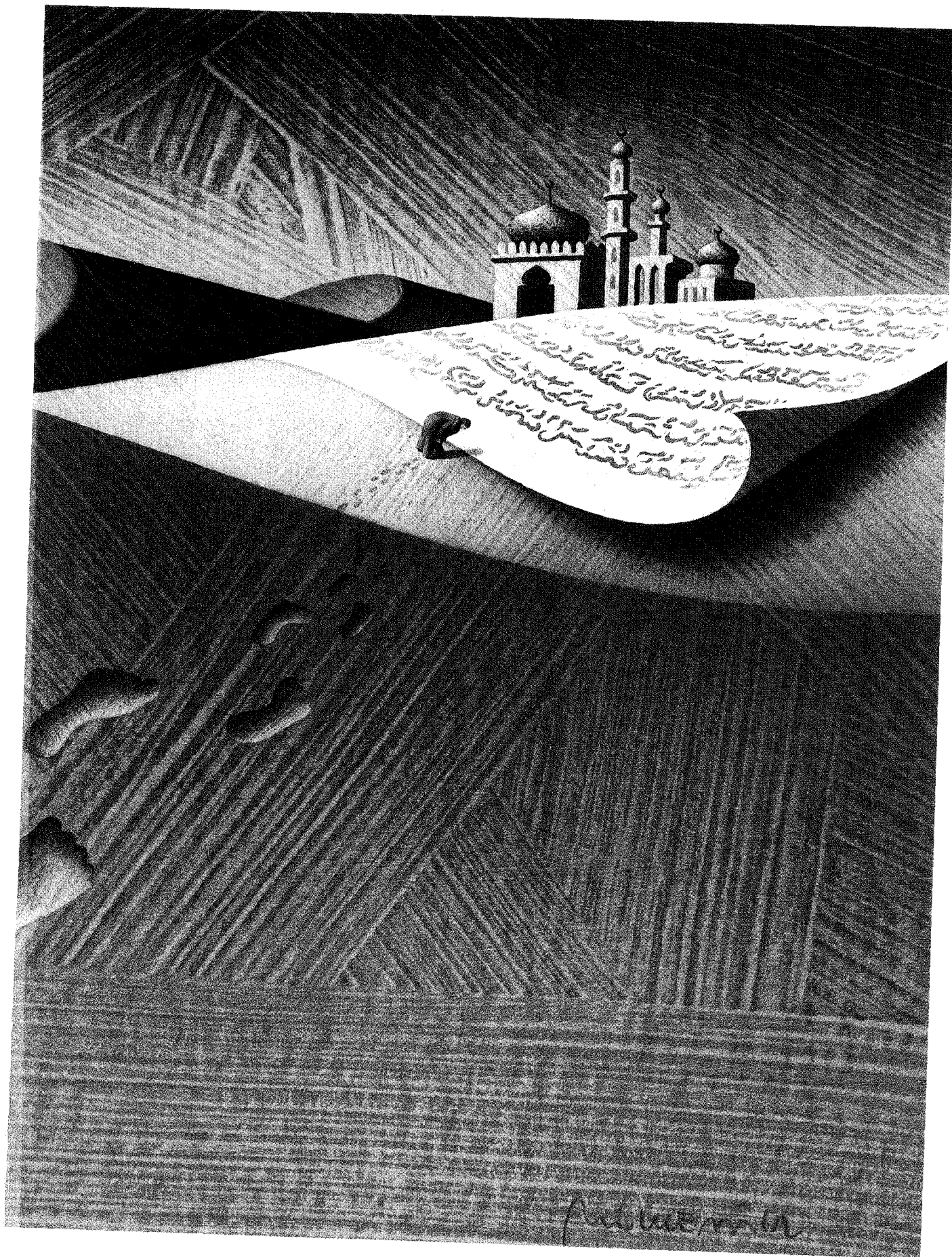
he also argued, in his book *Christ* (1930), that “in the Middle Ages Islam was merely an off-shoot of Arianism evoked by a meteorological event in the Red Sea area near Mecca.”

Not surprisingly, then, given the biases of much non-Islamic critical study of the Koran, Muslims are inclined to dismiss it outright. A particularly eloquent protest came in 1987, in the *Muslim World Book Review*, in a paper titled “Method Against Truth: Orientalism and Qur’ānic Studies,” by the Muslim critic S. Parvez Manzoor. Placing the origins of Western Koranic scholarship in “the polemical marshes of medieval Christianity” and describing its contemporary state as a “cul-de-sac of its own making,” Manzoor orchestrated a complex and layered assault on the entire Western approach to Islam. He opened his essay in a rage.

The Orientalist enterprise of Qur’ānic studies, whatever its other merits and services, was a project born of spite, bred in frustration and nourished by vengeance: the spite of the powerful for the powerless, the frustration of the “rational” towards the “superstitious” and the vengeance of the “orthodox” against the “non-conformist.” At the greatest hour of his worldly-triumph, the Western man, coordinating the powers of the State, Church and Academia, launched his most determined assault on the citadel of Muslim faith. All the aberrant streaks of his arrogant personality—its reckless rationalism, its world-domineering phantasy and its sectarian fanaticism—joined in an unholy conspiracy to dislodge the Muslim Scripture from its firmly entrenched position as the epitome of historic authenticity and moral unassailability. The ultimate trophy that the Western man sought by his dare-devil venture was the Muslim mind itself. In order to rid the West forever of the “problem” of Islam, he reasoned, Muslim consciousness must be made to despair of the cognitive certainty of the Divine message revealed to the Prophet. Only a Muslim confounded of the historical authenticity or doctrinal autonomy of the Qur’ānic revelation would abdicate his universal mission and hence pose no challenge to the global domination of the West. Such, at least, seems to have been the tacit, if not the explicit, rationale of the Orientalist assault on the Qur’ān.

Despite such resistance, Western researchers with a variety of academic and theological interests press on, applying modern techniques of textual and historical criticism to the study of the Koran. That a substantial body of this scholarship now exists is indicated by the recent decision of the European firm Brill Publishers—a long-established publisher of such major works as *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* and *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*—to commission the first-ever *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’an*. Jane McAuliffe, a professor of Islamic studies at the University of





Toronto, and the general editor of the encyclopedia, hopes that it will function as a "rough analogue" to biblical encyclopedias and will be "a turn-of-the-millennium summative work for the state of Koranic scholarship." Articles for the first part of the encyclopedia are currently being edited and prepared for publication later this year.

The *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an* will be a truly collaborative enterprise, carried out by Muslims and non-Muslims, and its articles will present multiple approaches to the interpretation of the Koran, some of which are likely to challenge traditional Islamic views—thus disturbing many in the Islamic world, where the time is decidedly less ripe for a revisionist study of the Koran. The plight of Nasr Abu Zaid, an unassuming Egyptian professor of Arabic who sits on the encyclopedia's advisory board, illustrates the difficulties facing Muslim scholars trying to reinterpret their tradition.

"A Macabre Farce"

"THE Koran is a text, a *literary* text, and the only way to understand, explain, and analyze it is through a literary approach," Abu Zaid says. "This is an essential theological issue." For expressing views like this in print—in essence, for challenging the idea that the Koran must be read literally as the absolute and unchanging Word of God—Abu Zaid was in 1995 officially branded an apostate, a ruling that in 1996 was upheld by Egypt's highest court. The court then proceeded, on the grounds of an Islamic law forbidding the marriage of an apostate to a Muslim, to order Abu Zaid to divorce his wife, Ibtihal Yunis (a ruling that the shocked and happily married Yunis described at the time as coming "like a blow to the head with a brick").

Abu Zaid steadfastly maintains that he is a pious Muslim, but contends that the Koran's manifest content—for example, the often archaic laws about the treatment of women for which Islam is infamous—is much less important than its complex, regenerative, and spiritually nourishing latent content. The orthodox Islamic view, Abu Zaid claims, is stultifying; it reduces a divine, eternal, and dynamic text to a fixed human interpretation with no more life and meaning than "a trinket . . . a talisman . . . or an ornament."

For a while Abu Zaid remained in Egypt and sought to refute the charges of apostasy, but in the face of death threats and relentless public harassment he fled with his wife from Cairo to Holland, calling the whole affair "a macabre farce." Sheikh Youssef al-Badri, the cleric whose preachings inspired much of the opposition to Abu Zaid, was exultant. "We are not terrorists; we have not used bullets or machine guns, but we have stopped an enemy of Islam from poking fun at our religion. . . . No one will even dare to think about harming Islam again."

Abu Zaid seems to have been justified in fearing for his life

and fleeing: in 1992 the Egyptian journalist Farag Foda was assassinated by Islamists for his critical writings about Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, and in 1994 the Nobel Prize-winning novelist Naguib Mahfouz was stabbed for writing, among other works, the allegorical *Children of Gabalawi* (1959)—a novel, structured like the Koran, that presents "heretical" conceptions of God and the Prophet Muhammad.

Deviating from the orthodox interpretation of the Koran, says the Algerian Mohammed Arkoun, a professor emeritus of Islamic thought at the University of Paris, is "a very sensitive business" with major implications. "Millions and millions of people refer to the Koran daily to explain their actions and to justify their aspirations," Arkoun says. "This scale of reference is much larger than it has ever been before."

Muhammad in the Cave

MECCA sits in a barren hollow between two ranges of steep hills in the west of present-day Saudi Arabia. To its immediate west lies the flat and sweltering Red Sea coast; to the east stretches the great Rub' al-Khali, or Empty Quarter—the largest continuous body of sand on the planet. The town's setting is uninviting: the earth is dry and dusty, and smolders under a relentless sun; the whole region is scoured by hot, throbbing desert winds. Although sometimes rain does not fall for years, when it does come it can be heavy, creating torrents of water that rush out of the hills and flood the basin in which the city lies. As a backdrop for divine revelation, the area is every bit as fitting as the mountains of Sinai or the wilderness of Judea.

The only real source of historical information about pre-Islamic Mecca and the circumstances of the Koran's revelation is the classical Islamic story about the religion's founding, a distillation of which follows.

In the centuries leading up to the arrival of Islam, Mecca was a local pagan sanctuary of considerable antiquity. Religious rituals revolved around the Ka'ba—a shrine, still central in Islam today, that Muslims believe was originally built by Ibrahim (known to Christians and Jews as Abraham) and his son Isma'il (Ishmael). As Mecca became increasingly prosperous in the sixth century A.D., pagan idols of varying sizes and shapes proliferated. The traditional story has it that by the early seventh century a pantheon of some 360 statues and icons surrounded the Ka'ba (inside which were found renderings of Jesus and the Virgin Mary, among other idols).

Such was the background against which the first installments of the Koran are said to have been revealed, in 610, to an affluent but disaffected merchant named Muhammad bin Abdullah. Muhammad had developed the habit of periodically withdrawing from Mecca's pagan squalor to a nearby mountain cave, where he would reflect in solitude. During one of these retreats he was visited by the Angel Gabriel—the very same angel who had announced the coming of Jesus to

the Virgin Mary in Nazareth some 600 years earlier. Opening with the command “Recite!,” Gabriel made it known to Muhammad that he was to serve as the Messenger of God. Subsequently, until his death, the supposedly illiterate Muhammad received through Gabriel divine revelations in Arabic that were known as *qur’an* (“recitation”) and that announced, initially in a highly poetic and rhetorical style, a new and uncompromising brand of monotheism known as *Islam*, or “submission” (to God’s will). Muhammad reported these revelations verbatim to sympathetic family members and friends, who either memorized them or wrote them down.

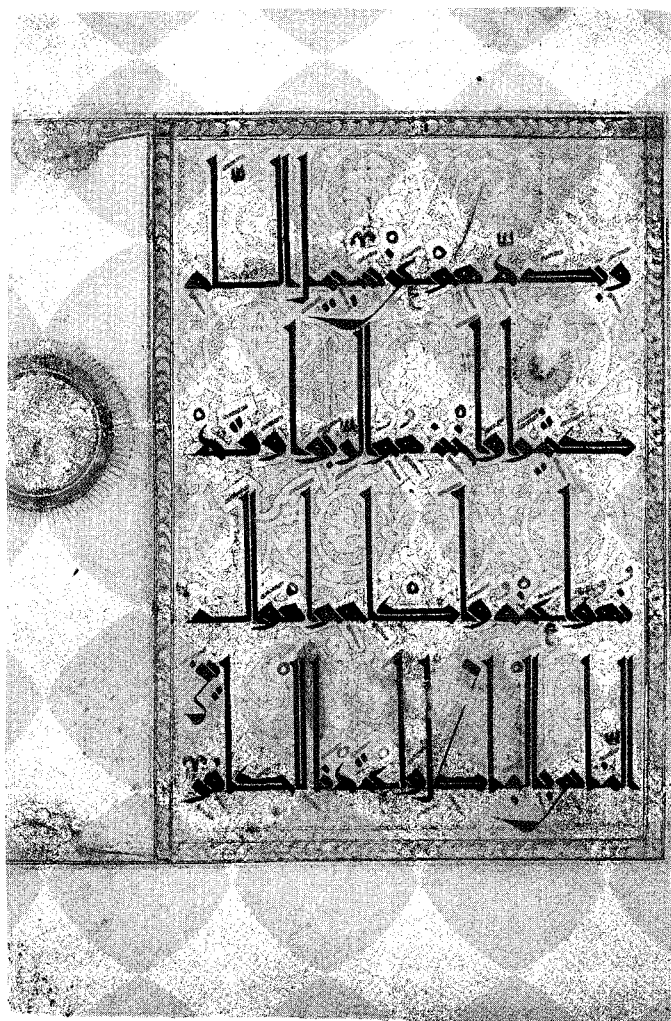
Powerful Meccans soon began to persecute Muhammad and his small band of devoted followers, whose new faith rejected the pagan core of Meccan cultural and economic life, and as a result in 622 the group migrated some 200 miles north, to the town of Yathrib, which subsequently became known as Medina (short for *Medinat al-Nabi*, or City of the Prophet). (This migration, known in Islam as the *hijra*, is considered to mark the birth of an independent Islamic community, and 622 is thus the first year of the Islamic calendar.) In Medina, Muhammad continued to receive divine revelations, of an increasingly pragmatic and prosaic nature, and by 630 he had developed enough support in the Medinan community to attack and conquer Mecca. He spent the last two years of his life proselytizing, consolidating political power, and continuing to receive revelations.

The Islamic tradition has it that when Muhammad died, in 632, the Koranic revelations had not been gathered into a single book; they were recorded only “on palm leaves and flat stones and in the hearts of men.” (This is not surprising: the oral tradition was strong and well established, and the Arabic script, which was written without the vowel markings and consonantal dots used today, served mainly as an aid to memorization.) Nor was the establishment of such a text of primary concern: the Medinan Arabs—an unlikely coalition of ex-merchants, desert nomads, and agriculturalists united in a potent new faith and inspired by the life and sayings of Prophet Muhammad—were at the time pursuing a fantastically successful series of international conquests in the name of Islam. By the 640s the Arabs possessed most of Syria, Iraq, Persia, and Egypt, and thirty years later they were busy taking over parts of Europe, North Africa, and Central Asia.

In the early decades of the Arab conquests many members of Muhammad’s coterie were killed, and with them died valuable knowledge of the Koranic revelations. Muslims at the edges of the empire began arguing over what was Koranic scripture and what was not. An army general returning from Azerbaijan expressed his fears about sectarian controversy to the Caliph ‘Uthman (644–656)—the third Islamic ruler to succeed Muhammad—and is said to have entreated him to “overtake this people before they differ over the Koran the way the Jews and Christians differ over their Scripture.”

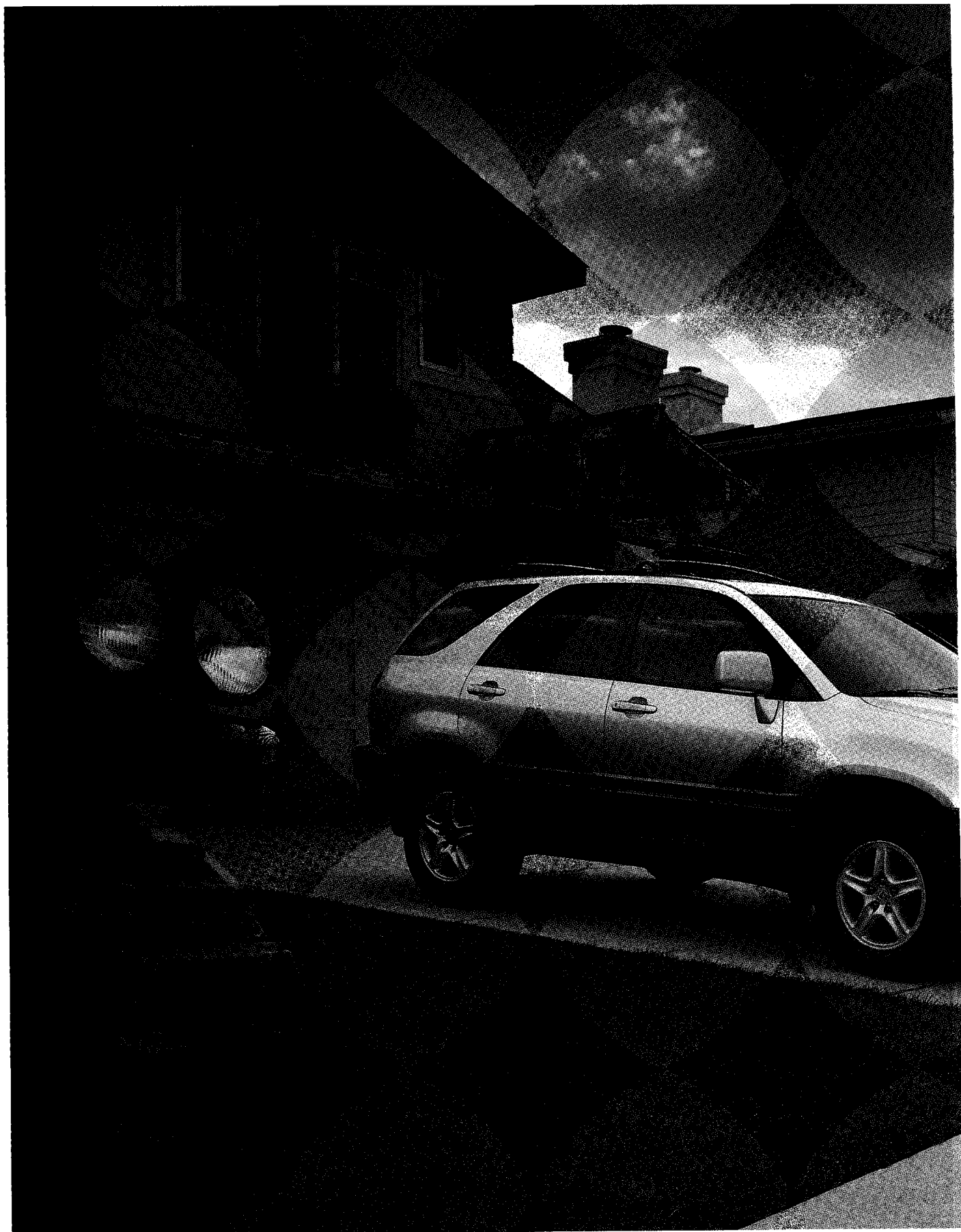
‘Uthman convened an editorial committee of sorts that carefully gathered the various pieces of scripture that had been memorized or written down by Muhammad’s companions. The result was a standard written version of the Koran. ‘Uthman ordered all incomplete and “imperfect” collections of the Koranic scripture destroyed, and the new version was quickly distributed to the major centers of the rapidly burgeoning empire.

During the next few centuries, while Islam solidified as a religious and political entity, a vast body of exegetical and historical literature evolved to explain the Koran and the rise of Islam, the most important elements of which are *hadith*,

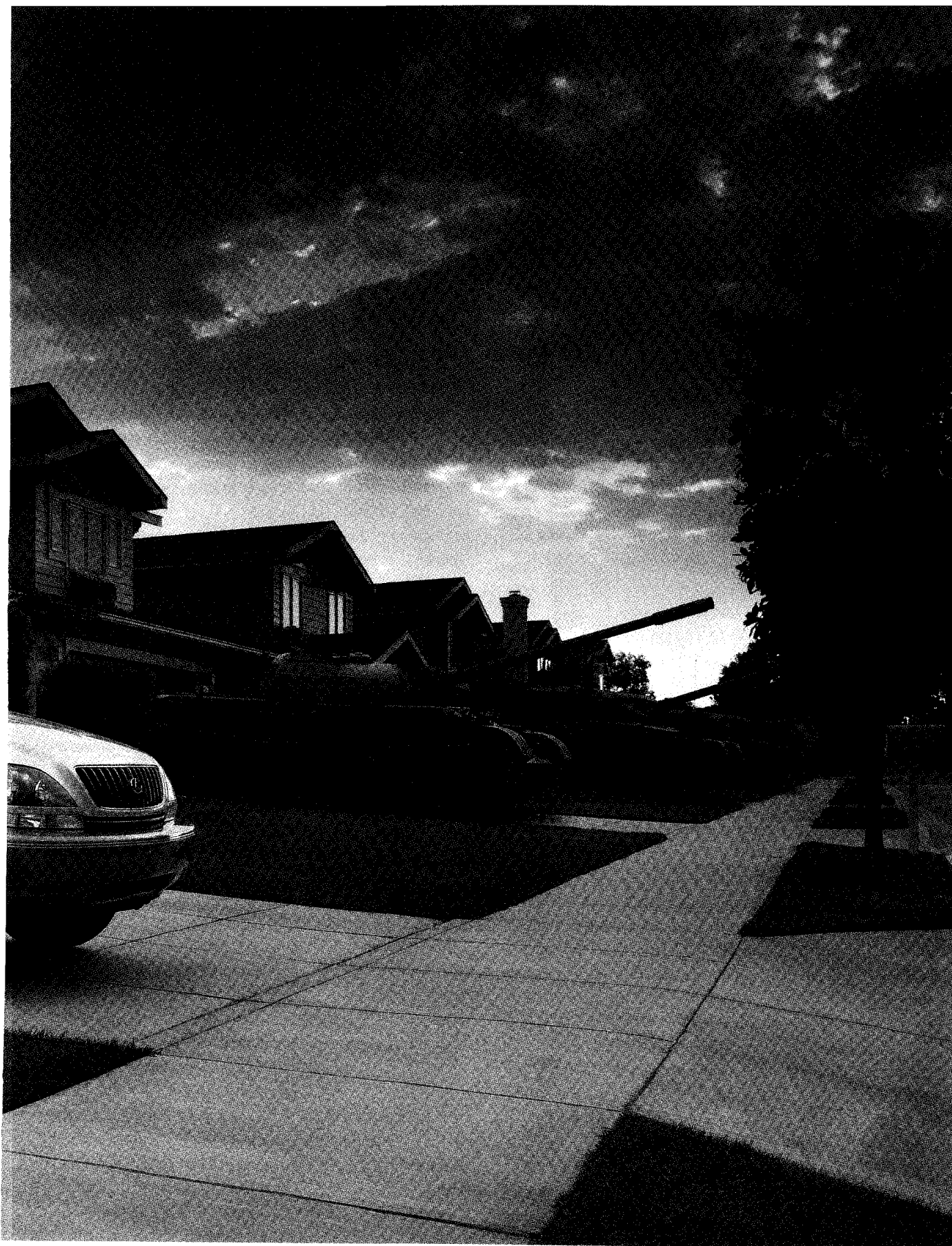


A PAGE FROM AN ELEVENTH- OR
TWELFTH-CENTURY PERSIAN KORAN

or the collected sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad; *sunna*, or the body of Islamic social and legal custom; *sira*, or biographies of the Prophet; and *tafsir*, or Koranic commentary and explication. It is from these traditional sources—compiled in written form mostly from the mid eighth to the mid tenth century—that all accounts of the revelation of the Koran and the early years of Islam are ultimately derived.



The RX 300. Motor Trend SUV of the Year. As rugged as any other SUV on the block.



It just rides a whole lot smoother.

THE RELENTLESS PURSUIT OF PERFECTION.



©1998 Lexus, a Division of Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc. Lexus reminds you to wear seatbelts, secure children in rear seat, obey all speed laws and drive responsibly. For more information, visit our web site at www.lexus.com or call 800-USA-LEXUS (800-872-5398).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

“For People Who Understand”

ROUGHLY equivalent in length to the New Testament, the Koran is divided into 114 sections, known as *suras*, that vary dramatically in length and form. The book’s organizing principle is neither chronological nor thematic—for the most part the *suras* are arranged from beginning to end in descending order of length. Despite the unusual structure, however, what generally surprises newcomers to the Koran is the degree to which it draws on the same beliefs and stories that appear in the Bible. God (*Allah* in Arabic) rules supreme: he is the all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-merciful Being who has created the world and its creatures; he sends messages and laws through prophets to help guide human existence; and, at a time in the future known only to him, he will bring about the end of the world and the Day of Judgment. Adam, the first man, is expelled from Paradise for eating from the forbidden tree. Noah builds an ark to save a select few from a flood brought on by the wrath of God. Abraham prepares himself to sacrifice his son at God’s bidding. Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt and receives a revelation on Mount Sinai. Jesus—born of the Virgin Mary and referred to as the Messiah—works miracles, has disciples, and rises to heaven.

The Koran takes great care to stress this common monotheistic heritage, but it works equally hard to distinguish Islam from Judaism and Christianity. For example, it mentions prophets—Hud, Salih, Shu’ayb, Luqman, and others—whose origins seem exclusively Arabian, and it reminds readers that it is “A Koran in Arabic, / For people who understand.” Despite its repeated assertions to the contrary, however, the Koran is often extremely difficult for contemporary readers—even highly educated speakers of Arabic—to understand. It sometimes makes dramatic shifts in style, voice, and subject matter from verse to verse, and it assumes a familiarity with language, stories, and events that seem to have been lost even to the earliest of Muslim exegetes (typical of a text that initially evolved in an oral tradition). Its apparent inconsistencies are easy to find: God may be referred to in the first and third person in the same sentence; divergent versions of the same story are repeated at different points in the text; divine rulings occasionally contradict one another. In this last case the Koran anticipates criticism and defends itself by asserting the right to abrogate its own message (“God doth blot out / Or confirm what He pleaseth”).

Criticism did come. As Muslims increasingly came into contact with Christians during the eighth century, the wars of conquest were accompanied by theological polemics, in which Christians and others latched on to the confusing literary state of the Koran as proof of its human origins. Muslim scholars themselves were fastidiously cataloguing the problematic aspects of the Koran—unfamiliar vocabulary, seem-

ing omissions of text, grammatical incongruities, deviant readings, and so on. A major theological debate in fact arose within Islam in the late eighth century, pitting those who believed in the Koran as the “uncreated” and eternal Word of God against those who believed in it as created in time, like anything that isn’t God himself. Under the Caliph al-Ma’mun (813–833) this latter view briefly became orthodox doctrine. It was supported by several schools of thought, including an influential one known as Mu’tazilism, that developed a complex theology based partly on a metaphorical rather than simply literal understanding of the Koran.

By the end of the tenth century the influence of the Mu’tazili school had waned, for complicated political reasons, and the official doctrine had become that of *i’jaz*, or the “inimitability” of the Koran. (As a result, the Koran has traditionally not been translated by Muslims for non-Arabic-speaking Muslims. Instead it is read and recited in the original by Muslims worldwide, the majority of whom do not speak Arabic. The translations that do exist are considered to be nothing more than scriptural aids and paraphrases.) The adoption of the doctrine of inimitability was a major turning point in Islamic history, and from the tenth century to this day the mainstream Muslim understanding of the Koran as the literal and uncreated Word of God has remained constant.

Psychopathic Vandalism?

GERD-R. Puin speaks with disdain about the traditional willingness, on the part of Muslim and Western scholars, to accept the conventional understanding of the Koran. “The Koran claims for itself that it is ‘*mubeen*,’ or ‘clear,’” he says. “But if you look at it, you will notice that every fifth sentence or so simply doesn’t make sense. Many Muslims—and Orientalists—will tell you otherwise, of course, but the fact is that a fifth of the Koranic text is *just incomprehensible*. This is what has caused the traditional anxiety regarding translation. If the Koran is not comprehensible—if it can’t even be understood in Arabic—then it’s not translatable. People fear that. And since the Koran claims repeatedly to be clear but obviously is not—as even speakers of Arabic will tell you—there is a contradiction. Something else must be going on.”

Trying to figure out that “something else” really began only in this century. “Until quite recently,” Patricia Crone, the historian of early Islam, says, “everyone took it for granted that everything the Muslims claim to remember about the origin and meaning of the Koran is correct. If you drop that assumption, you have to start afresh.” This is no mean feat, of course; the Koran has come down to us tightly swathed in a historical tradition that is extremely resistant to criticism and analysis. As Crone put it in *Slaves on Horses*,

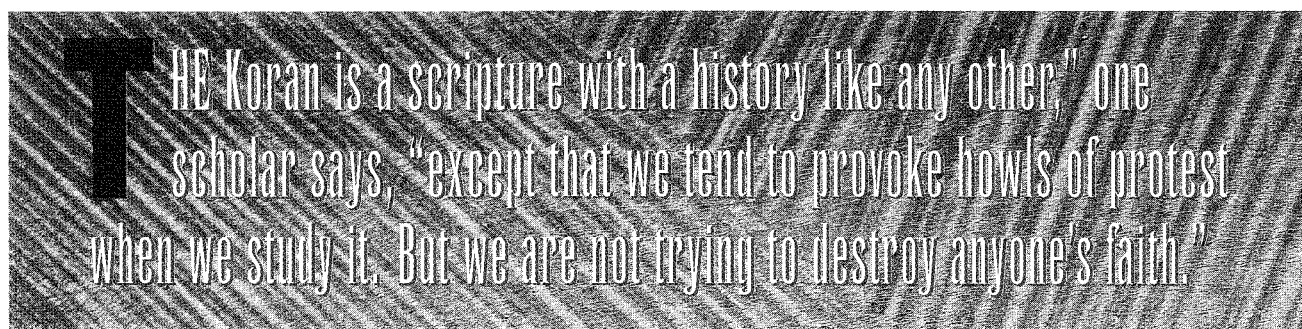
The Biblical redactors offer us sections of the Israelite tradition at different stages of crystallization, and their testi-

monies can accordingly be profitably compared and weighed against each other. But the Muslim tradition was the outcome, not of a slow crystallization, but of an explosion; the first compilers were not redactors, but collectors of debris whose works are strikingly devoid of overall unity; and no particular illuminations ensue from their comparison.

Not surprisingly, given the explosive expansion of early Islam and the passage of time between the religion's birth and the first systematic documenting of its history, Muhammad's world and the worlds of the historians who subsequently wrote about him were dramatically different. During Islam's first century alone a provincial band of pagan desert tribes-

in the critical study of the Koran today must contend with Wansbrough's two main works—*Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (1977) and *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (1978).

Wansbrough applied an entire arsenal of what he called the “instruments and techniques” of biblical criticism—form criticism, source criticism, redaction criticism, and much more—to the Koranic text. He concluded that the Koran evolved only gradually in the seventh and eighth centuries, during a long period of oral transmission when Jewish and Christian sects were arguing volubly with one another well to



men became the guardians of a vast international empire of institutional monotheism that teemed with unprecedented literary and scientific activity. Many contemporary historians argue that one cannot expect Islam's stories about its own origins—particularly given the oral tradition of the early centuries—to have survived this tremendous social transformation intact. Nor can one expect a Muslim historian writing in ninth- or tenth-century Iraq to have discarded his social and intellectual background (and theological convictions) in order accurately to describe a deeply unfamiliar seventh-century Arabian context. R. Stephen Humphreys, writing in *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (1988), concisely summed up the issue that historians confront in studying early Islam.

If our goal is to comprehend the way in which Muslims of the late 2nd/8th and 3rd/9th centuries [Islamic calendar/Christian calendar] understood the origins of their society, then we are very well off indeed. But if our aim is to find out “what really happened,” in terms of reliably documented answers to modern questions about the earliest decades of Islamic society, then we are in trouble.

The person who more than anyone else has shaken up Koranic studies in the past few decades is John Wansbrough, formerly of the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies. Puin is “re-reading him now” as he prepares to analyze the Yemeni fragments. Patricia Crone says that she and Michael Cook “did not say much about the Koran in *Hagarism* that was not based on Wansbrough.” Other scholars are less admiring, referring to Wansbrough's work as “drastically wrongheaded,” “ferociously opaque,” and a “colossal self-deception.” But like it or not, anybody engaged

the north of Mecca and Medina, in what are now parts of Syria, Jordan, Israel, and Iraq. The reason that no Islamic source material from the first century or so of Islam has survived, Wansbrough concluded, is that it never existed.

To Wansbrough, the Islamic tradition is an example of what is known to biblical scholars as a “salvation history”: a theologically and evangelically motivated story of a religion's origins invented late in the day and projected back in time. In other words, as Wansbrough put it in *Quranic Studies*, the canonization of the Koran—and the Islamic traditions that arose to explain it—involved the

attribution of several, partially overlapping, collections of *logia* (exhibiting a distinctly Mosaic imprint) to the image of a Biblical prophet (modified by the material of the Muhammadan *evangelium* into an Arabian man of God) with a traditional message of salvation (modified by the influence of Rabbinic Judaism into the unmediated and finally immutable word of God).

Wansbrough's arcane theories have been contagious in certain scholarly circles, but many Muslims understandably have found them deeply offensive. S. Parvez Manzoor, for example, has described the Koranic studies of Wansbrough and others as “a naked discourse of power” and “an outburst of psychopathic vandalism.” But not even Manzoor argues for a retreat from the critical enterprise of Koranic studies; instead he urges Muslims to defeat the Western revisionists on the “epistemological battlefield,” admitting that “sooner or later [we Muslims] will have to approach the Koran from methodological assumptions and parameters that are radically at odds with the ones consecrated by our tradition.”

Revisionism Inside the Islamic World

INDEED, for more than a century there have been public figures in the Islamic world who have attempted the revisionist study of the Koran and Islamic history—the exiled Egyptian professor Nasr Abu Zaid is not unique. Perhaps Abu Zaid's most famous predecessor was the prominent Egyptian government minister, university professor, and writer Taha Hussein. A determined modernist, Hussein in the early 1920s devoted himself to the study of pre-Islamic Arabian poetry and ended up concluding that much of that body of work had been fabricated well after the establishment of Islam in order to lend outside support to Koranic mythology. A more recent example is the Iranian journalist and diplomat Ali Dashti, who in his *Twenty Three Years: A Study of the Prophetic Career of Mohammed* (1985) repeatedly took his fellow Muslims to task for not questioning the traditional accounts of Muhammad's life, much of which he called "myth-making and miracle-mongering."

Abu Zaid also cites the enormously influential Muhammad 'Abduh as a precursor. The nineteenth-century father of Egyptian modernism, 'Abduh saw the potential for a new Islamic theology in the theories of the ninth-century Mu'tazilis. The ideas of the Mu'tazilis gained popularity in some Muslim circles early in this century (leading the important Egyptian writer and intellectual Ahmad Amin to remark in 1936 that "the demise of Mu'tazilism was the greatest misfortune to have afflicted Muslims; they have committed a crime against themselves"). The late Pakistani scholar Fazlur Rahman carried the Mu'tazilite torch well into the present era; he spent the later years of his life, from the 1960s until his death in 1988, living and teaching in the United States, where he trained many students of Islam—both Muslims and non-Muslims—in the Mu'tazilite tradition.

Such work has not come without cost, however: Taha Hussein, like Nasr Abu Zaid, was declared an apostate in Egypt; Ali Dashti died mysteriously just after the 1979 Iranian revolution; and Fazlur Rahman was forced to leave Pakistan in the 1960s. Muslims interested in challenging orthodox doctrine must tread carefully. "I would like to get the Koran out of this prison," Abu Zaid has said of the prevailing Islamic hostility to reinterpreting the Koran for the modern age, "so that once more it becomes productive for the essence of our culture and the arts, which are being strangled in our society." Despite his many enemies in Egypt, Abu Zaid may well be making progress toward this goal: there are indications that his work is being widely, if quietly, read with interest in the Arab world. Abu Zaid says, for example, that his *The Concept of the Text* (1990)—the book largely responsible for his exile from Egypt—has gone through at least eight underground printings in Cairo and Beirut.

Another scholar with a wide readership who is committed

to re-examining the Koran is Mohammed Arkoun, the Algerian professor at the University of Paris. Arkoun argued in *Lectures du Coran* (1982), for example, that "it is time [for Islam] to assume, along with all of the great cultural traditions, the modern risks of scientific knowledge," and suggested that "the problem of the divine authenticity of the Koran can serve to reactivate Islamic thought and engage it in the major debates of our age." Arkoun regrets the fact that most Muslims are unaware that a different conception of the Koran exists within their own historical tradition. What a re-examination of Islamic history offers Muslims, Arkoun and others argue, is an opportunity to challenge the Muslim orthodoxy from within, rather than having to rely on "hostile" outside sources. Arkoun, Abu Zaid, and others hope that this challenge might ultimately lead to nothing less than an Islamic renaissance.

THE gulf between such academic theories and the daily practice of Islam around the world is huge, of course—the majority of Muslims today are unlikely to question the orthodox understanding of the Koran and Islamic history. Yet Islam became one of the world's great religions in part because of its openness to social change and new ideas. (Centuries ago, when Europe was mired in its feudal Dark Ages, the sages of a flourishing Islamic civilization opened an era of great scientific and philosophical discovery. The ideas of the ancient Greeks and Romans might never have been introduced to Europe were it not for the Islamic historians and philosophers who rediscovered and revived them.) Islam's own history shows that the prevailing conception of the Koran is not the only one ever to have existed, and the recent history of biblical scholarship shows that not all critical-historical studies of a holy scripture are antagonistic. They can instead be carried out with the aim of spiritual and cultural regeneration. They can, as Mohammed Arkoun puts it, demystify the text while reaffirming "the relevance of its larger intuitions."

Increasingly diverse interpretations of the Koran and Islamic history will inevitably be proposed in the coming decades, as traditional cultural distinctions between East, West, North, and South continue to dissolve, as the population of the Muslim world continues to grow, as early historical sources continue to be scrutinized, and as feminism meets the Koran. With the diversity of interpretations will surely come increased fractiousness, perhaps intensified by the fact that Islam now exists in such a great variety of social and intellectual settings—Bosnia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, the United States, and so on. More than ever before, anybody wishing to understand global affairs will need to understand Islamic civilization, in all its permutations. Surely the best way to start is with the study of the Koran—which promises in the years ahead to be at least as contentious, fascinating, and important as the study of the Bible has been in this century. ☸

FAN LETTERS

FALL

for Buster Keaton

Ever wester
ever faster
Buster, hasten
your disaster.

Film is falling,
time a twister,
sound unfurling
her nor'easter.

Scale the mast
and list to keening.

Buster, listen:
are you dreaming?

Are you falling?
Are you flying?
Buster, cinema
is dying.

Not a whisper.
Never laughter.
Buster, thank you
for disaster.

—DANA STEVENS

HARPO

That's right. When words don't say it,
stop talking. Become beautiful and strange.
The one of sudden arrivals,
announced by a horn.

A faun, seen between trees.

Pluck your thin music, your eyes
getting rounder, face changing
like clouds. And when lies
don't work, even silent ones,

get caught silver-handed,
with everything tucked up your sleeve.

—SUSAN DONNELLY

VIDEO BLUES

My husband has a crush on Myrna Loy
and likes to rent her movies, for a treat.
It makes some evenings harder to enjoy.

The list of actresses who might employ
him as their slave is too long to repeat.
(My husband has a crush on Myrna Loy,

Carole Lombard, Paulette Goddard, coy
Jean Arthur with that voice as dry as wheat . . .)
It makes some evenings harder to enjoy.

Does he confess all this just to annoy
a loyal spouse? I know I can't compete.
My husband has a crush on Myrna Loy.

And can't a woman have her dreamboats? Boy.
I wouldn't say my life is incomplete,
but some evening I could certainly enjoy

two hours with Cary Grant around as my own toy.
I guess, though, we were destined not to meet.
My husband has a crush on Myrna Loy,
which makes some evenings harder to enjoy.

—MARY JO SALTER

THE LIQUID EARTH

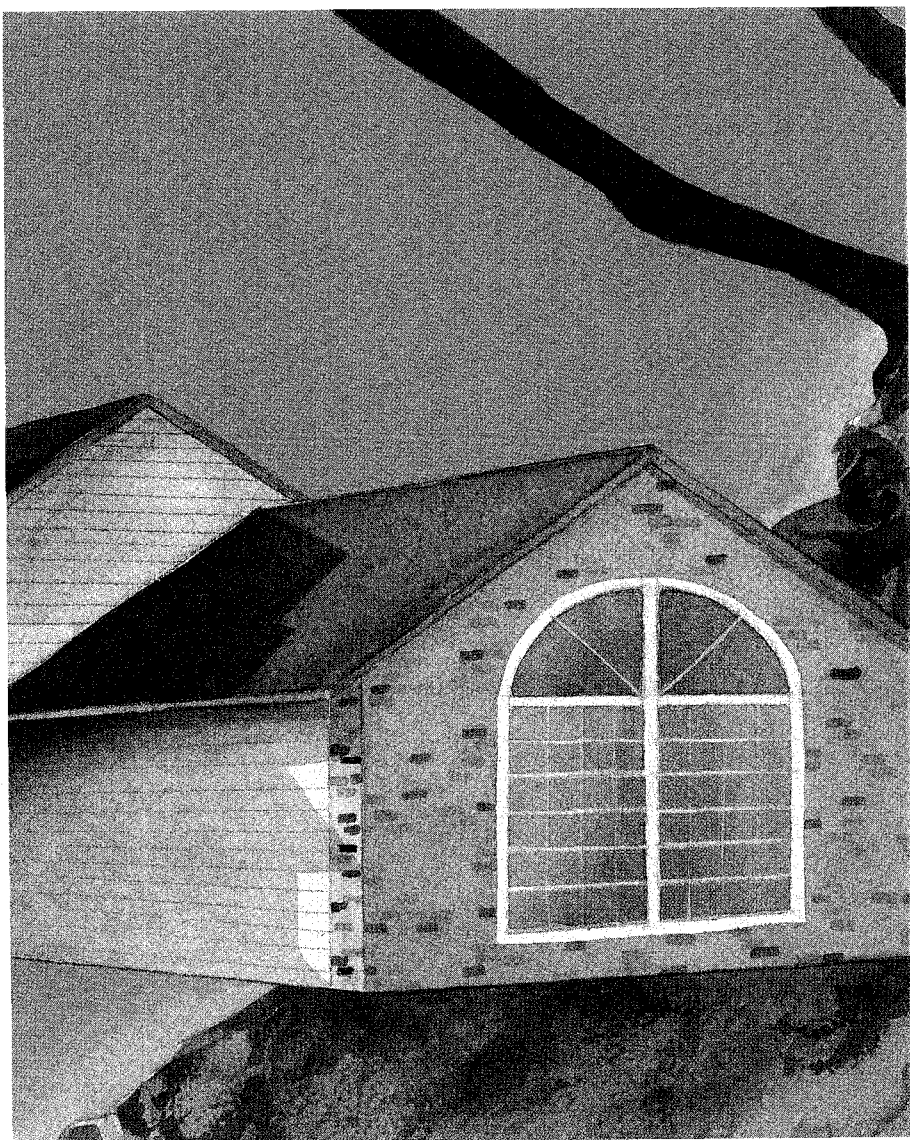
by BRENDA BELL

Landslides and other “ground failures” cost more lives and more money each year than all other natural disasters combined, and their incidence appears to be rising. Nevertheless, the government devotes few resources to their study—and the foolhardy continue to build and live in places likely to be consumed one day by avalanches of mud

WE live near Seattle, on Bainbridge Island, which is roughly the size of Manhattan but has a population of only 19,000.

As in most small communities, news travels rapidly by word of mouth. We heard about the mudslide about four hours after it happened, on Sunday, January 19, 1997. Our friend Dave told us about it late that morning, as he scuffed his muddy shoes on the mat inside our front door, waiting to pick up his daughter from a sleepover at our house. It was raining—not hard, but steadily. Almost twenty-six inches of precipitation had fallen since the beginning of the rainy season, in October—40 percent above normal—and the ground had been slipping all around the Puget Sound area for weeks.

Dave said that the slide had demolished a house in Rolling Bay, a picturesque old neighborhood on the east side of the island, with sweeping views across the sound to the dark glitter of Seattle and the serrated backdrop of the Cascade Mountains. The house was one of about twenty squeezed onto a sliver of beach beneath a high cliff that parallels the Rolling Bay shore. It was owned by a couple who had been remodeling it while they lived in the basement with their children. Their liv-



ing quarters were buried now, and rescuers were digging through tons of mud to find the family. It didn't look good, Dave said.

After he left, I yelled upstairs to our seventeen-year-old daughter, Anna. "Did you hear about that? A big mudslide over on Rolling Bay."

"Rolling Bay? That's where I was baby-sitting last night." Anna had come home around midnight and told me how nervous the mother had been about leaving her children—a three-month-old baby and his two-year-old brother—with a sitter. Now, for the first time, I realized that we had not bothered to ask Anna where she had been. "Was the house on the water?" I asked.

"Yeah."

A tremor of alarm prickled the back

of my neck. "Who were you baby-sitting for?"

"Mr. Herren—you know, the biology teacher." Herren taught advanced-placement classes at the high school, where his exuberant teaching style, good looks, and long honey-colored hair made him a standout.

"Were they sleeping in the basement?"

"Well, yeah. But it's not really a basement. They're just on the bottom floor."

That prickle again. I thought of my daughter giving the baby his bottle, hoisting the sturdy two-year-old onto her hip. They had watched the video *Babe* together just hours ago. I thought of cold gray mud smothering them all.

Anna went upstairs to call her friends,

to find out if anyone knew anything. No one did. The phone rang once, and she had a brief conversation. Then her father and I heard her feet on the stairs. She took them slowly, one step at a time. Someone had heard something on the TV news, Anna said. *Step, step.* Her voice was matter-of-fact. They weren't releasing names, but they knew the ages of the children in the house. *Step. Step.* Anna stood at the bottom of the stairs, her expression strangely unreadable. "They were two years old and three months old," she said, and her words dissolved abruptly in a hard sob.

IT was still raining when I got to Rolling Bay Walk that afternoon. The sky was a flat, dead gray—the same color as the water, and the beach, and the mud surrounding what was left of the Herren house. A portion of the top floor lay on its side, the windows framed in raw plywood and the roof lapped by the incoming tide. An orange excavating machine reached over mounds of weeping earth and shattered timbers, its segmented arm gingerly scooping up debris in the search for survivors. Emergency workers in raincoats and hard hats clambered around, but it was impossible to tell what they were doing—or what they could do. There was no way to know what the three-story house had looked like. Save for the empty shell of the toppled roof, it was gone.

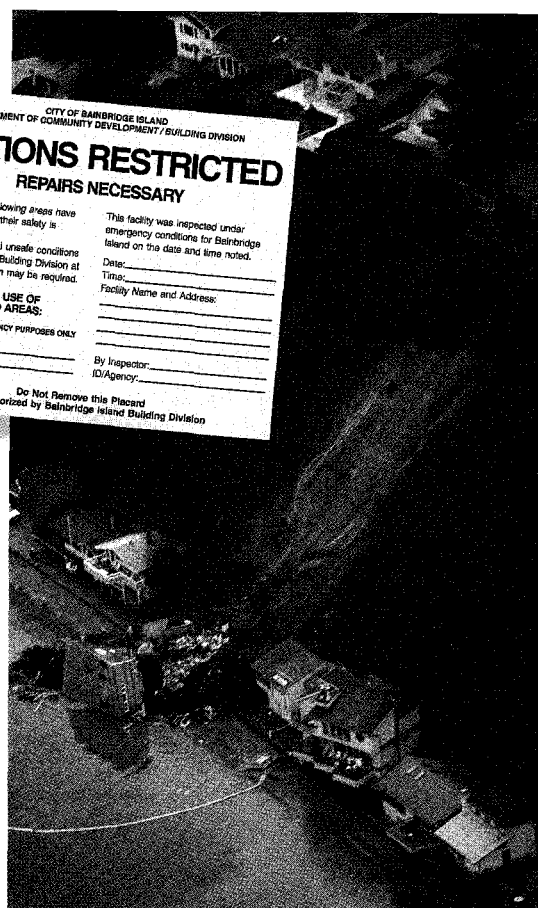
Despite the heavy equipment and a TV helicopter that hovered offshore, the scene seemed peculiarly quiet. The search crews had already found the body of Dwight Herren; when I saw a woman leading her search dog back to her van, I knew there was no hope for the others. Word soon passed among the bystanders that the rescuers were bringing out the body of Herren's wife, Jennifer Cantrell-Herren. A man standing next to me began to silently cry. The tiny forms of the two-year-old, Skyler, and the baby, Cooper, were recovered next. All had been sleeping in the same bedroom on the ground floor when the tremendous force of the mudslide crushed the house on top of them, killing them instantly.

Farther up the beach the street was



Bainbridge Island, Wash.: slide scar, and the remains of the Herren house on Rolling Bay Walk, January, 1997

GREG GILBERT/THE SEATTLE TIMES



TERESA TANURA/THE SEATTLE TIMES

blocked by a recent slide, a small one that had not yet been shoveled away. Next to the roadblock a vacant house bore a notice that it was unsafe for occupation. Several such notices had been posted the previous year after a slide had destroyed another house. Why did people persist in living here, when the proof of disaster was all around them?

As darkness fell on Rolling Bay Walk, neighbors called for the Herrens' big Labrador, Henry. The dog didn't turn up, but other reminders of the family did. In the days that followed, detritus washed up on the beach—ruined clothing, remnants of electronic equipment, shattered kitchen utensils. Tiny disposable diapers were half buried in the sand. A little parade of rusting Tonka trucks rested nearby. People put some of the items on top of a concrete bulkhead, out of reach of the tides. "For the father," a neighbor said, meaning Dwight Herren's despairing father, Vern, who walked the beach daily, trying to salvage what he could. A week after the slide I found a pair of broken binoculars, a shattered tape cassette, a packet of allergy medicine. I added

them to the bleak collection. Nothing was left of this family's life but pieces of worthless trash.

The three-story house on the beach had been Dwight Herren's dream; he was building it with his own hands and the help of family members, who pitched in on weekends. He and his two brothers had grown up on a stony beach on the west side of the island, in the lee of a forested cliff much like the one at Rolling Bay, and Dwight wanted the same for his own sons. "He had an attraction to the sea, to the water," his father, an avid sailor, told me. "I have it too."

After Dwight received a master's degree from Cornell, he got a job as a marine biologist for the State of Washington, diving in water so cold that he wore two wet suits, mapping beds of geoduck clams and sea cucumbers. It was dangerous work, but he was careful. He believed utterly in himself, and that confidence was contagious. When Dwight and Jennifer bought the beach house, their fathers had voiced doubts. "We both advised them not to build there; it didn't look good to us," Vern Herren

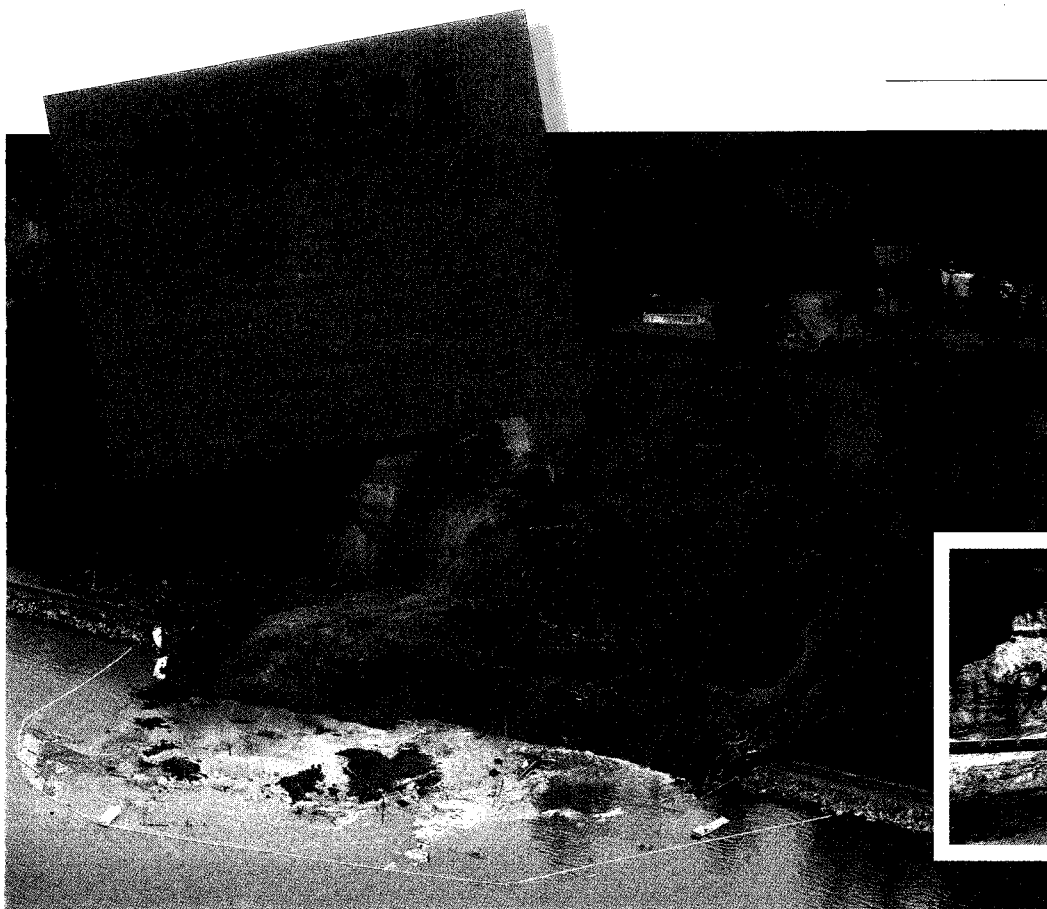
said. "But Dwight said those houses had been there for sixty or seventy years and nothing had ever happened."

A neighbor was watching when Henry was finally found. A crane unearthed the dog's corpse while clearing away the last remains of the house. "He was right under the house, in the place where he used to sleep," the man said. He spoke softly, his voice blurred with sadness, and he had to clear his throat.

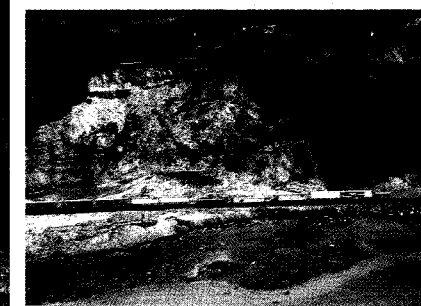
Once the crane finished its dreary work, the scene looked as if no house had ever stood there, no dog had ever bounded to the front door, no children had been rocked to sleep within the walls. There was just another gap in the tattered bulwark of houses along Rolling Bay Walk, their backs to the treacherous cliff and their trusting faces fixed on the heedless sea.

HAZARD ZONES

LANDSLIDES are perhaps the most widespread geologic hazard, and, since they are a function of gravity, an intractable one. They play an essential role in the synchrony by



Tracks north of Seattle where, in January of 1997, mud swept a freight train into Puget Sound. Inset: a month later, the track repaired



ED HARP/USGS

which the uplifting continents are continually worn down, their sediments swept away and deposited somewhere else to start anew. They made their first known appearance in written history in 1767 B.C., when earthquake-triggered slides in China dammed the Yi and Lo Rivers. Peruvians have been well acquainted with terrible landslides for thousands of years, and have words to distinguish different kinds of them: *huaico* is a mudslide containing large and small rocks, *llapana* a smooth mudflow. Entire villages are easily lost to avalanches in the Andes—18,000 people were killed in a single slide in 1970, and a devastating series of mudflows claimed more than 20,000 victims in Colombia in 1985. The kind of slide that killed the Herrens is known to geologists as a debris flow—a rapid collapse of the surface that is characteristic of slope failures in many parts of the world.

Despite growing scientific knowledge about where and why landslides occur, the threat they pose continues to increase, for reasons familiar to students of ecological hazards: increasing

development in vulnerable terrain, global climate changes that exacerbate severe weather, and deforestation. The financial costs incurred by slides run into the billions of dollars annually in countries including the United States, Italy, India, and Japan. Poorer countries such as Nepal and Indonesia, with less development at stake, suffer great losses in human lives and productivity. Landslide casualties are usually lumped together with those of more-publicized natural phenomena: most of the victims of last year's earthquakes in Afghanistan, for instance, were killed when their homes were crushed by the avalanches of debris that followed the quake and its aftershocks. Similarly, mudslides were responsible for much of the death and destruction wrought by Hurricane Mitch in Central America this past November.

The Japanese spend more than \$4 billion annually in attempts to control debris flows and to respond to the disasters they cause. In a country that idealizes the harmony of nature, the scenic river systems near urban areas are trussed and choked by countless *sabo*

dams, which trap mud and rocks sliding down from the mountains. An American version of these dams is found in southern California, where Los Angeles County maintains a system of massive "flood control" breastworks to protect towns like Pasadena and Glendale—not from rising water but from the boulder-laden debris flows that can rumble out of the canyons of the San Gabriel Mountains after a hard rain.

Ground failures of various sorts occur in every state; according to the National Research Council, they annually cause more deaths (twenty-five to fifty) and greater economic loss (roughly estimated at \$1.5 billion) than all other natural hazards combined. Yet they get little public attention. Because there is no nationwide system for reporting landslides, hard statistics are difficult to come by: the last inventory of landslide hazards was completed in the 1980s by a geologist working for the U.S. Geological Survey who toured all fifty states (most of them in his own van)—a 70,000-mile survey that took him three years.

Though the American West Coast is

one of the most slide-prone regions in the world, other natural disasters there steal the headlines—earthquakes, volcanoes, floods, wildfires. Debris flows are widely seen as cosmological misfires, freaks of nature, and as a result people tend to underestimate the risks they pose. Such misperceptions contribute to the general neglect of landslide studies by research entities including the USGS, which in recent years has been distracted by personnel cutbacks and congressional threats to eliminate the agency. “The USGS competes with the Forest Service as the most demoralized federal resource agency,” says Bill Dietrich, a professor of geology at the University of California at Berkeley. “It came under attack from various political points of view—it was no longer seen as so essential.” Meanwhile, the agency has struggled—unsuccessfully, its critics say—to mount a comprehensive landslide-hazards program. “I don’t think it’s for lack of trying,” Dietrich says. “It’s for lack of getting people’s attention.” That struggle is reflected in the staffing of the USGS landslide group, which numbers only fifteen employees. Its annual budget of \$2.4 million is dwarfed by the \$49 million earthquake program, which has a staff ten times as large.

**The Rolling Bay slide
took about three seconds:
2,000 tons of rocks, trees,
and sodden soil landed
on a single house, and
it was all over before the
couple next door, who
were sitting outside
in their hot tub, realized
what was happening.**

Compared with other geological hazards, landslide zones are very narrow, very specific, and relatively easy to avoid. Unfortunately, they’re often also attractive places to live. The Puget Sound lowlands are a good example. Born of mud and ice, these unstable hills of sand, silt, and gravel were bulldozed and compacted by glaciers that obliterated much of the geological record before the Holocene. The jagged shoreline edges some of the newest real estate in the country, and some of the most coveted. But a third of it—some 660 miles along the islands and mainland—is composed of steep bluffs continually subject to collapse.

The Rolling Bay slide took about three seconds, scooping a narrow track only about three feet deep down the face of the cliff. The cumulative weight of even a shallow debris flow is enormous: in this case 2,000 tons of rocks, trees, and sodden soil landed with uncanny accuracy on the Herrens’ house. It was all over before the couple next door, who were sitting outside in their hot tub, realized what was happening. There was a sudden giant exhalation—*whumpf!*—as the air was pushed out of the collapsing house. A forty-foot fir tree, its saucer-shaped root system intact, slid down the cliff and halted atop the wreckage, as erect as if it had been planted there. Seven houses down in the opposite direction another neighbor heard the noise and walked outside in her bathrobe to look around. She saw the shattered plywood walls on the beach, the mountain of mud, and the tree standing serenely. She heard no more sounds. “It was utterly still,” she later told me. “So still that I thought this must have happened the night before, and I just hadn’t noticed.”

When Dave Montgomery, an assistant professor of geology at the University of Washington, saw the front-page story in the newspaper the next day, he shook his head. “I looked at that picture in the paper,” he told me afterward, “and I thought, My God—here’s a cliff that’s been moving backward for 10,000 years. Why would you live below it?” Since the last Ice Age the cliff

at Rolling Bay has not so much stood as retreated, retaining a steep pitch that teases the angle of repose—the maximum angle at which a slope will hold fast. “Normal slopes tend to round over time. A steep, straight slope is something that is created and maintained by landslides,” Montgomery says.

In the stormy weeks before the Herrens were killed, Seattle newspapers carried many reminders of the dangers of steep slopes: a man’s house was destroyed beneath him as he rode it into the water like a ship’s captain; a mudslide slammed into a freight train and threw it into Puget Sound, from the same tracks where an Amtrak train carrying 650 passengers had passed only two hours before; city officials spent \$900,000 in a Sisyphean effort to stabilize a sagging section of Seattle’s Magnolia Bluff, where a half dozen homes were losing their precarious perch. These stories were read not as cautionary tales but as entertaining anecdotes about life in the rainy Northwest.

“We all live with risks,” Dietrich says. “But we have some sense of those risks. Most people have *no* sense of the landslide risk. You don’t live through a landslide at your house very often. Now, we have places that we can easily identify that were formed by periodic debris flows. I would never live in one of those places. You couldn’t pay me anything to live there. If that’s the case, then how do I inform a person who’s thinking of living there, or is already living there, enough to realize the decision they’re making?”

JUST SITTING THERE, GROWING TREES?

THE earth comes unglued for a variety of reasons, but there is usually a single triggering event. The largest, most catastrophic debris flows are caused by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions—hence the prevalence of landslides throughout the Pacific Rim and the mountainous regions of China, the former Soviet Union, and Central Europe. But most often the culprit is simply water—in the form of

rainfall, snowmelt, or river flow. Thus there have also been spectacular slides in Iowa and in the placid river valleys of Quebec. Pittsburgh and Cincinnati, constructed on loose sediments cut by river systems, incur some of the highest landslide costs in the United States.

Perhaps the most common medium for landslides is colluvium—basically particles of weathered rock in the process of becoming soil. Mature soils settle out into homogenous layers, called horizons. If colluvium stays still long enough, it may form horizons too. But on unstable hillsides it remains young and restless, a poorly sorted conglomeration of silt, sand, pebbles, and rocks.

Colluvium covers most of the ground surface in humid temperate zones and semi-arid mountainous areas. It is ubiquitous in the western United States and the Appalachian Range, from Maine to Alabama. Along the California and Oregon coasts tectonic stress has shattered the sandstone-and-shale bedrock of the Coast Range, and frequent ocean storms have accelerated the weathering of the rock. The result is a mantle of loose, cruddy dirt—pre-dirt, if you will—that produces some of the best forests on earth. Colluvium appears to be just sitting there, growing trees, but over hundreds and thousands of years it is on the move, and the direction of its movement is always downhill. It trickles into narrow gulleys, or swales, which form distinctive tracks running straight down the steep foothills. These natural sluices also catch water draining off the hilltop ridges. Colluvium may accumulate for millennia in a swale, until it is washed out by a debris flow into the valley below and the cycle starts anew.

The angle of repose for colluvium slopes averages 35 degrees but varies widely. There are thickly forested 45-degree slopes in the Oregon Coast Range that appear stable, and 26-degree hillsides in the San Francisco Bay area that have failed catastrophically. The stability of the glacially compacted bluffs on Washington's Puget Sound is sorely threatened beyond 33 degrees, especially when conditions are unusually wet. The overall incline of the cliff at

Rolling Bay is just under 40 degrees.

The first axiom of debris flows is that where one has occurred, others will inevitably follow. But nobody knows when. Water must enter the soil not only in sufficient but also in correctly timed amounts. Typically what is required is a long saturation period followed by intense bursts of rain concentrated in just a few hours or days. Water passes rapidly through surface material until it hits bedrock or clay, creating a saturated zone as it fills the pores between solid particles. Rising pore pressure creates a buoyancy that effectively reduces the stabilizing friction of the colluvium on the slope beneath it. At some point gravity overcomes the natural inertia, and the soil mass breaks loose, sliding down the less permeable surface below.

Or maybe not. The debris-flow scenario depends on numerous factors: soil depth and composition, the kind of vegetation and the size of tree roots, subtle variations in slope shape, road cuts, drainage pipes, incongruities in underlying bedrock, even the presence of small animal burrows. Water can collapse a slope after traveling beneath the surface from miles away. Vibrations from trains are suspected of triggering debris flows. And sometimes there seems to be no particular cause. The 1978 Bluebird Canyon landslide, near Los Angeles, which caused \$15 million in property damage, had no obvious triggering event. In June of 1993, 75 acres of Ontario farmland suddenly liquefied and clogged the South Nation River, creating the great Lemieux landslide. In September of 1997 a man sitting at a bar in Port Angeles, Washington, was crushed to death when a mudslide destroyed the building. The area had had no appreciable rain for months.

There are basically two kinds of landslides: slow and fast. The latter are more likely in loose, coarse material like sand or colluvium; most clay soils stick together better and are less prone to rapid movement. Large, deep-seated slides, in which the dislocation originates far below the face of a slope, tend to occur more slowly than shallow de-

In 1982 a Pacific front stalled over the San Francisco Bay area, precipitating the largest natural disaster in the region since the earthquake of 1906. When the weather cleared, aerial photographs identified 18,000 debris flows.

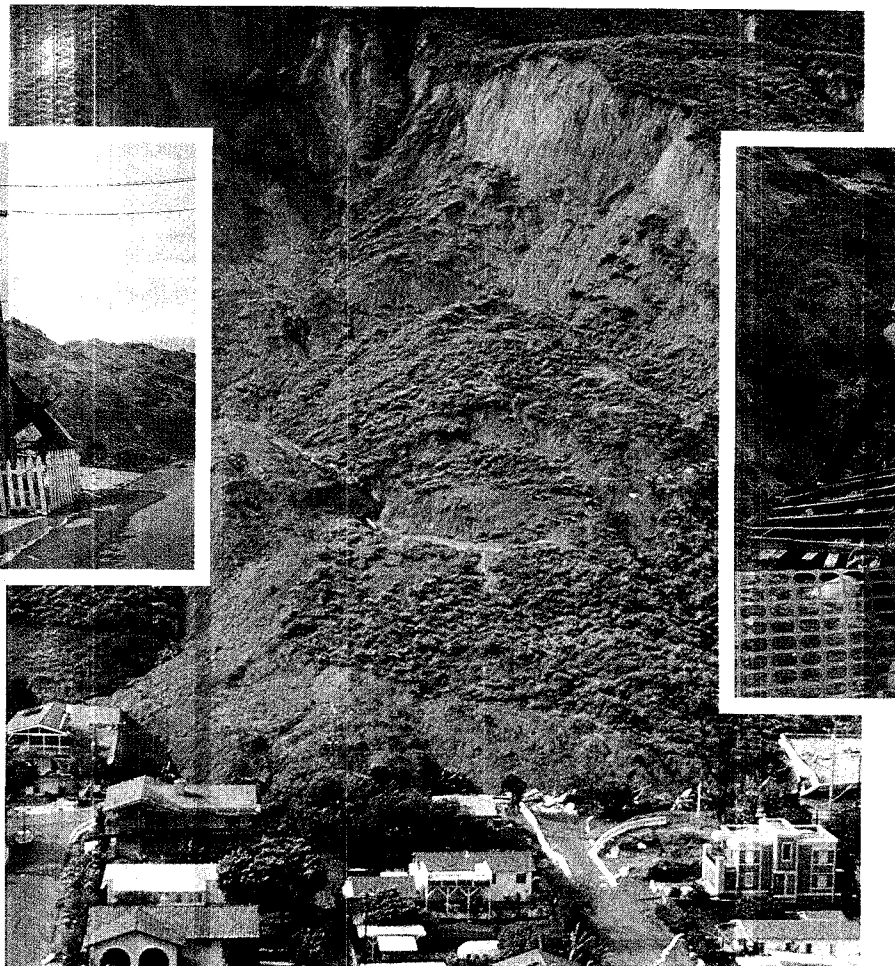
bris flows, which are more deadly. Because a few growing seasons will cover the tracks of shallow slides, their tell-tale scars are harder to spot. Slide-prone slopes may remain hidden for generations until revealed by the perfect storm. For instance, it took geologists most of this century to grasp how vulnerable the San Francisco Bay area is to debris flows. "We had always considered it a southern-California problem," Ray Wilson, a landslide expert with the USGS, says. "Then we got this storm in 1982."

In January of that year a Pacific front stalled over the Bay area, dumping as much as twenty-four inches of rain. The steady downpour was punctuated by intense cloudbursts that reminded Wilson of his home town near Houston, where tropical deluges are commonplace. In San Francisco they precipitated the largest natural disaster in the region since the earthquake of 1906, causing thirty-three deaths and nearly \$300 million in property damage. When the weather cleared, aerial photographs identified 18,000 debris flows in the ten counties around San Francisco Bay.

For most of California's history the periodic slides in the Coast Range took place far from populated areas. But



*Aftermath of
the 1995 La Conchita
landslide, in
southern California.
Insets: details
of the destruction*



when suburban development pushed out into the foothills, in the latter half of this century, it spread into the serpentine valleys beneath the swales. Seventy percent of the slides in 1982 took place in the swales.

The 1982 storm spawned volumes of research papers and forever altered geologists' understanding of the northern-California landscape. But it was also instructive for what it revealed about human nature. Jerry Weber, a consulting geologist in Santa Cruz, says that our "collective disaster memory" goes back only two years, even when lives have been lost. Even when those lives were next door. "People cannot focus any longer than that unless they're directly involved," Weber says. As time passed after the 1982 storm, the horror of the slides faded from memory—and so did the idea that they might recur. When Santa Cruz County officials ordered two dozen houses removed from a dangerously unstable area where ten people had perished in a slide, homeowners fought the action and sued to reoccupy their dwellings. One turned away inspectors at gunpoint.

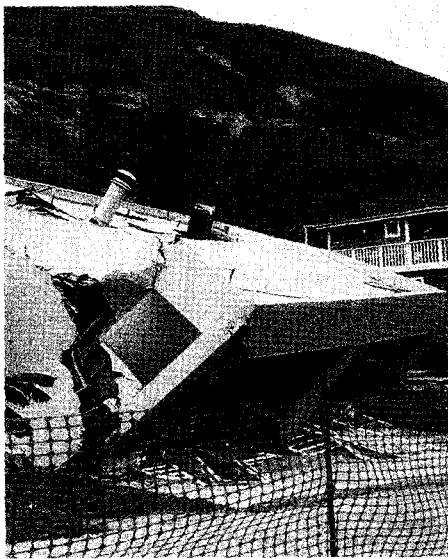
THE ODDSTAD TRAGEDY

ONE of the most publicized debris flows of the 1982 storm occurred on Oddstad Boulevard, in Pacifica, a town of 37,000 people south of San Francisco. Mud with the consistency of wet concrete poured down a hillside in a 1970s subdivision, smashing two houses and trapping three small children inside one of them. Rescuers shoveled through the wreckage for thirty-six hours, hoping the children had survived in a pocket of air. They hadn't. Cal Hinton, a Pacifica city councilman who was the fire chief at the time, helped to dig out the bodies. "I remember taking the blanket off them. They'd been in bed asleep. They were still clean underneath, no blood or anything. I don't remember what the autopsy said, whether they were crushed or smothered. I imagine it was a combination."

The two lots where the houses had stood remained vacant for years. Ray Wilson often passed by on his way to a hiking trail at the end of Oddstad. One day he noticed a FOR SALE sign on one

of the properties. By 1998 new houses had been built on both lots and sold to new owners. This did not seem to be a noteworthy event in Pacifica. The last newspaper story on the Oddstad tragedy was written years ago. The parents of the dead children divorced and moved away. Deflection walls have been built behind the new houses; dirt and vegetation have been scraped from the hillside, and subsurface pipes are in place that are supposed to collect water before it can cause more slides.

A legacy of the 1982 storm is Pacifica's policy requiring expert review of new construction on problem sites like these. These sites are common in Pacifica—as might be expected in a town bounded by earthquake faults, a mountain range, and cliffs that are sloughing into the sea. But despite the precautions being taken, the San Francisco consulting geologist Robert Wright is uneasy. "I spent about five years of my life studying that slide," he says, "and I'm personally uncomfortable with rebuilding houses there. You just don't put homes in the mouths of swales if you can help it. It's just too risky."



ABOVE AND FACING PAGE: ROBERT L. SCHUSTER/USGS

The early days of a slow-moving, deep-seated slide in Seattle's Magnolia Bluff area.

January, 1997. The house on the left is beginning to tilt downslope.

The destruction wrought on the same house by the slide's continuing advance.



LEFT AND BELOW: AL CHLEBORAD/USGS



There are "hard" solutions to landslide risk—debris dams, retaining structures, graded slopes, elaborate drainage systems, even, in Japan, a \$210 million highway overpass that coils improbably around a large slide area. Geoscientists argue that "soft" solutions like zoning and building codes, which rely on simple avoidance, are cheaper and safer in the long run. San Mateo County, which permits only one living unit per forty acres in geologically hazardous areas, probably has the strictest such ordinances in the country. But they don't apply inside Pacifica and other San Mateo towns, where local governments say "maybe" to developers far more often than "no." Saying no is especially difficult because slides occur so erratically, over such long intervals. New developments notwithstanding, the question persists: What should be done about dangerous places where people already live?

A landslide-warning system would at least alert residents when slide conditions were developing. "Even if you're in an area that in 1982 would have been a deathtrap, you're really only in danger for a few days a decade—usual-

ly at night," Ray Wilson says. "You can broadcast a warning over the weather radio that advises people when they need to leave. If they choose to stay—well, God bless 'em and keep 'em." In 1986 in the Bay area the USGS set up the nation's first warning system, employing a two-step rainfall threshold that correlated with high debris-flow activity. The first threshold was a seasonal accumulation of eleven inches, normally reached a few weeks after the winter solstice. The second threshold was any single storm that exceeded 30 percent of the local mean average precipitation. By monitoring a network of seventy-five rain gauges and several piezometers (which measure pore pressure in the water table), the USGS knew when rainfall was approaching dangerous levels, and issued warnings so that residents of risky areas could evacuate. There was talk of expanding the system to Los Angeles County. But when the agency downsized, in 1995, the program was abruptly canceled. "The whole thing cost peanuts—maybe fifty thousand dollars a year," Wilson says. "We got all kinds of good publicity, and it

really raised public consciousness. My worry is that people have forgotten all about it now."

Torrential rains brought by last winter's El Niño weather pattern produced what Wilson calls "a bumper crop" of debris flows along northern California's coastal hills, from Big Sur to Mendocino. As the geologists had hoped, slide activity appeared to correlate with their rainfall-threshold calculations. It also coincided with severe landsliding in southern California, raising concern that increasingly frequent heavy weather (there have been three strong El Niños and two weaker ones in the past sixteen years) will cause more debris flows than ever before. Even so, nothing yet compares to the scores of deaths and the tremendous damage wrought in the Coast Range by the storm of 1982. And after all this time a critical question remains unanswered. Why did the hillsides—18,000 of them—suddenly fail in unison?

"I've always had this idea," Robert Wright says, "that when you have an Oddstad and it decides to go off, it's owing to something happening in the

ground on a very small scale. I think the answer might be in microscopic changes brought about by weathering processes that change the nature of how the particles behave. On Oddstad there were several swales that did not fail in 1982. They had the same materials, the same rainfall, everything was the same—except something was not. The swale that did fail had sat there for maybe eight thousand years. There's no way there haven't been rainstorms bigger than that in all that time. It went through maybe hundreds of them and didn't fail. Why then? We don't know."

THE MYSTERY OF MUD

MUCH about mud is puzzling. Its flow behavior is complex, combining characteristics of solid and liquid matter. It can carry large boulders and other heavy objects for long distances—a feat not entirely explained by the Archimedes principle, the buoyancy effect that allows a boat to float in water because it is lighter than the material it displaces. Big rocks weigh more than the mud they displace, so why don't they sink? Apparently mud holds them up by behaving as a

porous solid, a sort of honeycomb that both supports solid objects and allows the flow of water. Only when enough water has seeped away does gravity gain the upper hand again, allowing the mixture of clay, rock, and sand to settle and harden into solid earth.

Because spontaneously occurring debris flows are notoriously difficult to anticipate and observe in nature (nothing happens for years, and then it's over in a flash), scientists have carried out all sorts of experiments in an effort to understand how they work. They've loaded glass-sided flumes with a mixture of water and black and white sand, and recorded the movement of the sand grains with a high-speed camera. They've mixed wallpaper paste with coal slack, and PVC beads with water, to mimic the clay-sand-gravel slurry of mudflows. At the world's largest experimental landslide flume, in Oregon's Willamette National Forest, USGS researchers have slopped together truckloads of material similar to the composition of two of the biggest volcanic mudslides in recent geologic history: the debris flow from the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens, and the Osceola Mudflow that reshaped the face of Mount Rainier 5,000 years ago. A much smaller experimental contraption is a mud-filled condom (size large, nonlubricated) that is set rolling down a plywood ramp to measure the rate of deformation—how rapidly the latex ellipse loses and regains its shape, over and over.

Yet despite painstaking calculations of flow, stress, velocity, water pressure, and the like, a stubborn mystery still shrouds the flash point at which solid earth becomes semi-liquid. Does it happen incrementally—one grain of soil breaks loose, then two, then four, then sixteen, in a logarithmic cascade—or all at once? Does it start at the base, or "toe," of a slope (imagine taking an orange from the bottom of a pyramid at the supermarket) or at the top (growing like a snowball as it descends)? Once the process begins, is there any way to know what's happening and get out of the way? These were some of the questions that led me to Dave Montgomery,

at the University of Washington's Quaternary Research Center. (The Quaternary period, which Montgomery refers to as the geological "here and now," began about 1.6 million years ago.) It turns out that landslides don't give up answers to any of these questions easily.

"We have lots of theories and very little data," Montgomery admits. There is evidence that some landslides, particularly those in sandy soils common in the Coast Range and the Puget Sound area, begin as a slower earth movement called a translational slide. In such cases rising pore pressure and subsurface deformation of the soil—both detectable with carefully placed instruments—could function as warning signals. But Montgomery doubts that the signals would be of much use. "If the delay is very short, which I think it is, then a warning may be pointless. Once a fairly large area starts to move, it happens fast. These things travel up to ten meters per second—that's twenty-two miles an hour. By the time you hear them, you don't have time to get out of the way."

Like his colleague Bill Dietrich, Montgomery is a geomorphologist, someone who studies how landscapes change over time. In the past, geomorphology was less concerned with the mechanics of these physical processes than with the history and sequence of their occurrence. William Morris Davis (1850–1934), the most influential geomorphologist of this century, theorized that topography evolves over millennia according to a repetitive cycle analogous to youth, adolescence, maturity, old age, and eventual rejuvenation. For many decades his adherents viewed landscapes through the same wide-angle evolutionary lens. They examined a riverbank, for instance, not to understand the process of erosion but to figure out which phase of life the river had reached in the eternal cycle, and how that coincided with the geologic history of its surroundings.

By the 1960s Davis's holistic view of landscape evolution had fallen out of favor, replaced by technical studies that generated "hard" scientific data. Landscapes began to be analyzed in terms of

Our "collective disaster memory" goes back only two years. When Santa Cruz County officials ordered houses removed from an area where ten people had perished in a slide, one homeowner turned away inspectors at gunpoint.

TIAA-CREF.

Proven

Solutions

To Last

a Lifetime.

You may be able to

live

But you can't

count on it.

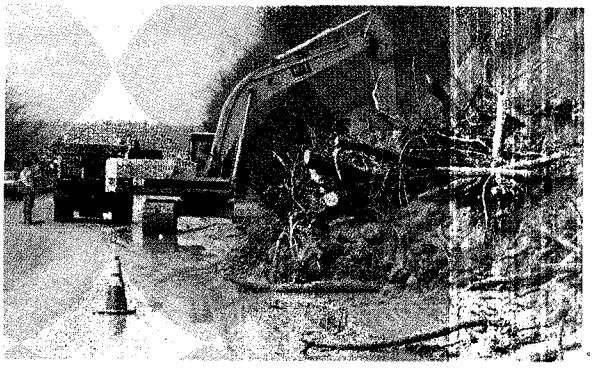
A great relationship may do a lot for you emotionally. But it's not going to help the two of you much financially. For a comfortable, worry-free future, you need sound advice and solid thinking. That's why over 2 million people depend on TIAA-CREF. We offer mutual funds, and IRAs, insurance, personal annuities, and investment savings plans that can help you reach your financial goals. For more complete information, including charges and expenses, call 800 226-0147 for your free Personal Investing Kit. It contains prospectuses for our variable annuities and mutual funds. Please read them carefully before you decide to invest or send money. It's your first step towards developing a lasting relationship—with your money.

TIAA-CREF. Financial services exclusively for people in education and research.

www.tiaa-cref.org



**Ensuring the future
for those who shape it.™**



Not only mountains and coastal regions are vulnerable to ground failure: details of the damage done by mudslides in Ohio in 1997.



their smallest components; indeed, the history of an entire river basin could theoretically be read in the minute workings of a single feeder stream. Today geomorphologists focus almost exclusively on specific earth processes that can be observed and measured as they are happening. They assume that the earth's topography is continuing to evolve pretty much as it always has—by a relatively small set of quantifiable mechanisms such as weathering, erosion, and sedimentation, which are basically the same everywhere, though they occur at different rates. These rates are critical to understanding how landforms evolved, and how they will continue to change. Thus data from a few sites can be used to predict what will happen over much wider geographic areas—which is just what Dietrich and Montgomery are doing with computer models of landslide-hazard zones in the Oregon Coast Range.

One of their main sources of data is a clear-cut swale at Mettman Ridge, in the coastal foothills near Coos Bay, Oregon. Stripped of its timber, tilted precariously at 43 degrees, positioned to catch buckets of rain from Pacific storms, Mettman

Ridge is classic debris-flow habitat. For nine years researchers swarmed all over the slope. They punched hundreds of holes in the ground to measure pore water pressure, built weirs to capture and measure runoff, installed rain gauges and a sprinkler system to simulate storm rainfall, and set up sensors to track hydraulic movement through the colluvium and cracks in the underlying bedrock. They planned eventually to drench the slope until it failed, monitoring the slide with a bevy of instruments. It would have been a rare show—seldom had a hillside anywhere been subjected to such intense scrutiny. But curtain time came early. In November of 1996 heavy rains in Oregon triggered hundreds of mudslides, including one that wiped out the installation at Mettman Ridge and brought the studies to a premature end.

Montgomery's reaction was sanguine. After all, he and his colleagues had picked the site because it was likely to fail. Though no one saw the slide happen, the instruments captured "a beautiful record of slide initiation," he says. "We got some fabulous data—we're still ploughing through it." Among their ear-

ly findings: a surprising amount of water moves rapidly through fractures in subsurface bedrock during high-intensity storms, playing a greater role in raising pore pressure than had been thought and creating "hot spots" that can fail. Because the fractures are hidden and infinitely variable, they cause problems for computer models that assume uniform diffusion of rainfall. "It makes it rather difficult to predict which of the most hazardous areas would actually go in a particular storm," Montgomery says.

Timothy Davies, a geological engineer at Lincoln University, in New Zealand, believes that debris flows are among the chaotic natural systems that are too complex to be predicted by current analytical methods. "It may well be the case that a theoretical solution to the prediction of debris-flow behavior is beyond human intelligence at present," Davies declared in a paper presented in 1997 at an international debris-flow conference in San Francisco. Yet the models developed by Montgomery and Dietrich appear to work reasonably well—with 80 percent accuracy—in the Coast



March, 1997: landslide damage on portions of U.S. Route 52, along the Ohio River Valley, after eight inches of rain fell in just two days

Range. They're already being used to suggest "no-cut" zones for timber companies, whose clear-cuts have been widely blamed for the destructive mudslides that have plagued western Oregon in recent years. And with a little tweaking they could also be applied to the Puget Sound region, which has a similar climate and soil profile.

"We can tell pretty well where debris flows are likely to happen," Dietrich explains. "We can write equations that represent how water runs off a landscape and how that water can lead to destabilization of the soil mass, and put that in the computer on a numerical surface representing the landscape. We can then show the relative risk that there'll be some shallow landsliding that can generate debris flows that can take away fish habitat or hit housing." The models work best with digital topography produced by laser altimetry, an aerial technology capable of mapping subtle variations in terrain even when the ground is obscured by evergreen tree canopies. Slide risk is established by calculating the steady rainfall necessary to trigger a slide anywhere on the digi-

tal landscape. The less rain required, the higher the probability of slides.

In a scientific discipline once wholly dependent on fieldwork, technology has eased geomorphology's labor while expanding its reach. It used to take geologists months to put together landslide-susceptibility maps by hand, using plastic grids to overlay numerous factors—a task that computers have rendered obsolete. Thanks to a USGS project on the Internet, geologists all over the country can monitor instruments embedded in slopes on the Highway 50 corridor in California and along the section of train track where the freight train was thrown into Puget Sound two years ago.

COMING FULL CIRCLE

"GEOLOGISTS used to spend their lives just mapping stuff," Jonathan Stock, a graduate student at the University of California at Berkeley, told me as we slogged on foot toward the Mettman Ridge site one summer day. "Now you have to have

quantitative skills. And you have to be sort of a naturalist—to look at the natural world and see all the forces affecting it." Along with Montgomery and another graduate student, Kevin Schmidt, of the University of Washington, we clambered over huge bleached logs that lay tossed about like pickup sticks in the dry streambed. Occasionally the geologists would bend over to knock off a piece of log for carbon-dating, to determine how long it had been since a previous slide dropped and buried it here. The 1996 debris flow had dumped mud, gravel, wood chips, pieces of lumber and PVC pipe, and rocks of all sorts and sizes in the narrow channel. Foxglove and thimbleberry had already taken root.

Stock knew the area well. In the course of his research on stream-channel erosion he had crouched in the sandstone streambed and painstakingly measured the depth of 20,000 minute grooves where flakes of rock had been gouged out by the debris flow. Up above, at the scarp of the slide, Schmidt had dug up thousands of roots and pulled them apart to measure their ten-

Local governments are often caught between those who blame (and sue) cities for conditions that exacerbate slide activity and those who question why all taxpayers should bear the cost of supporting the relative few who live in unsafe areas.

sile strength. He's studying the relative resistance of various plants and saplings to breaking and shearing, and the extent of the role that vegetation plays in slope stability. Tree roots anchor colluvium to bedrock and increase the angle of repose. Mature evergreens blunt cloudbursts that trigger slides, deflecting and absorbing rainfall before it hits the ground. However, there's a counter-effect: vegetation promotes thickening of the soil, which over centuries adds weight and loosens the grip of root systems on bedrock. "Steep slopes, particularly steep wet slopes, fail in natural environments all the time," Montgomery says. "It's just that the frequency changes after logging." Some studies suggest that it increases as much as tenfold.

Earlier we had viewed Mettman Ridge from a four-seater aircraft that rose above Coos Bay and its sawmill-turned-casino, a smelly mountain of wet sawdust at the Weyerhaeuser export center, and cargo ships waiting to take wood products to Asia. We passed over cold sloughs and sand dunes and veered toward the emerald foothills. In the velvet maze of ridge and swale the study site appeared as a thin brown gash. The geologists snapped photos as the plane banked in nauseating circles. It seemed

a curious undertaking: nine years of probing this insignificant patch, measuring the water that trickled through its veins, testing the tensile strength of its tree roots, studying 20,000 scratches in the streambed.

Why do you do this? I asked Montgomery. "I enjoy worrying about stuff that nobody else cares about," he said cheerfully. In a way that few could have predicted twenty or thirty years ago, the current focus on process studies and computer modeling is bringing geomorphologists full circle, leading them to reexamine William Morris Davis's idea of the long-term topographical life cycle. "Now we're standing back from single hillslopes and looking at whole systems," Montgomery said. "We're not focusing so much on the individual parts. You do an entire watershed analysis instead of studying a single streambed for years. I'll go back to Coos Bay for two or three more years. But it's mostly over."

Montgomery signaled to the pilot that they had enough pictures. Mettman Ridge, which generated the data for half a dozen Ph.D. dissertations, including Montgomery's, faded into the distance.

MAPS

BROAD-shouldered, long-armed, and alarmingly fit at sixty-five, Jerry Thorsen seems as firmly rooted to the ground as a post oak. A geologist who once traveled around Washington for the state Department of Natural Resources, he now works as a private geological consultant specializing in slope analysis. Since the wet winter of two years ago he's had no dearth of clients. Scrambling up and down muddy cliffs choked with bracken, Thorsen tossed me tips for reading the bluffs: a vertical stripe of alders all the same size conceals an avalanche scar; evergreen trees growing at strange angles are a bad sign; a flattened bench, or shelf, partway down a slope is a terrible place to put a house, because it was created by slide action.

In the 1970s Thorsen helped to map 2,000 miles of convoluted shoreline in

and around Puget Sound for the Department of Ecology. The resulting atlas identifies the 660 miles with unstable slopes, and records evidence of both old and recent slides—an invaluable if incomplete source of geological information. "We didn't have time to walk every beach, crawl up the bank, and go through the jungle," Thorsen says. "But it was our best guess at the time." The atlas should be required reading for every owner or prospective buyer of waterfront property, but it's out of print now. Years ago a supervisor at the Department of Ecology decided they were taking up too much room, and had a truckload taken to the dump. Though local planning departments still have copies, few citizens ask to see them.

In the spring following the Rolling Bay slide geologists reconnoitered the shoreline from the air for the Federal Emergency Management Agency. On at least a third of the coastal bluffs there was evidence of active or recent landsliding. A notorious example is Magnolia Bluff, where several houses on a sagging bench are falling awkwardly toward Elliott Bay. Tour buses sometimes stop to view the progress. This is a slow-moving, deep-seated slide area that also spawns rapid debris flows. Magnolia has been a money pit since the 1930s; the Work Projects Administration spent one million Depression dollars to hand-dig a network of drainage trenches as much as a hundred feet deep on Magnolia and several other bluffs. The drains still work, but they haven't stopped the debris flows.

The public tab for landslide damage in Seattle from the 1996–1997 storms is \$35 million. The city hopes to recover \$19 million from FEMA and federal highway funds, thereby spreading the cost of mudslides—like floods in the Midwest and hurricanes in Florida—to the rest of the country. "Where does it end, and to what extent should the general taxpayer accommodate the interests of folks who choose to build in risky locations?" Margaret Pageler, a Seattle city councilwoman, asks. California has created special entities called geological hazard-abatement districts

that enable property owners in specific locales to levy their own taxes to deal with landslide hazards. There are no such funding mechanisms yet in Washington. Seattle and other local governments are often caught between homeowners who blame (and sue) the city for drainage conditions that exacerbate slide activity, and other citizens who question why all taxpayers should bear the high cost of building and maintaining infrastructure to serve the relative few who live in unsafe areas.

Nearly all the slides in Seattle in the winter of 1996–1997 took place in zones mapped as unstable twenty-five years ago; none damaged buildings constructed under new, more rigorous ordinances adopted in 1990. However, development is still permitted, with restrictions, on slopes as steep as 45 degrees—far more leniency than most Bay-area jurisdictions allow. “Saying no is a huge issue—it’s a really hard thing to do,” says Kate Janeway, a Seattle attorney and an expert in natural-hazard law. “Public officials see themselves assailed by developers, their lawyers. They probably say

yes more than they should. The best way to say no is to have the maps that do it, parcel by parcel—maps that make it clear the area is so unstable we won’t allow anything on them. Let’s all agree to shut the door.”

WHAT DO YOU DO?

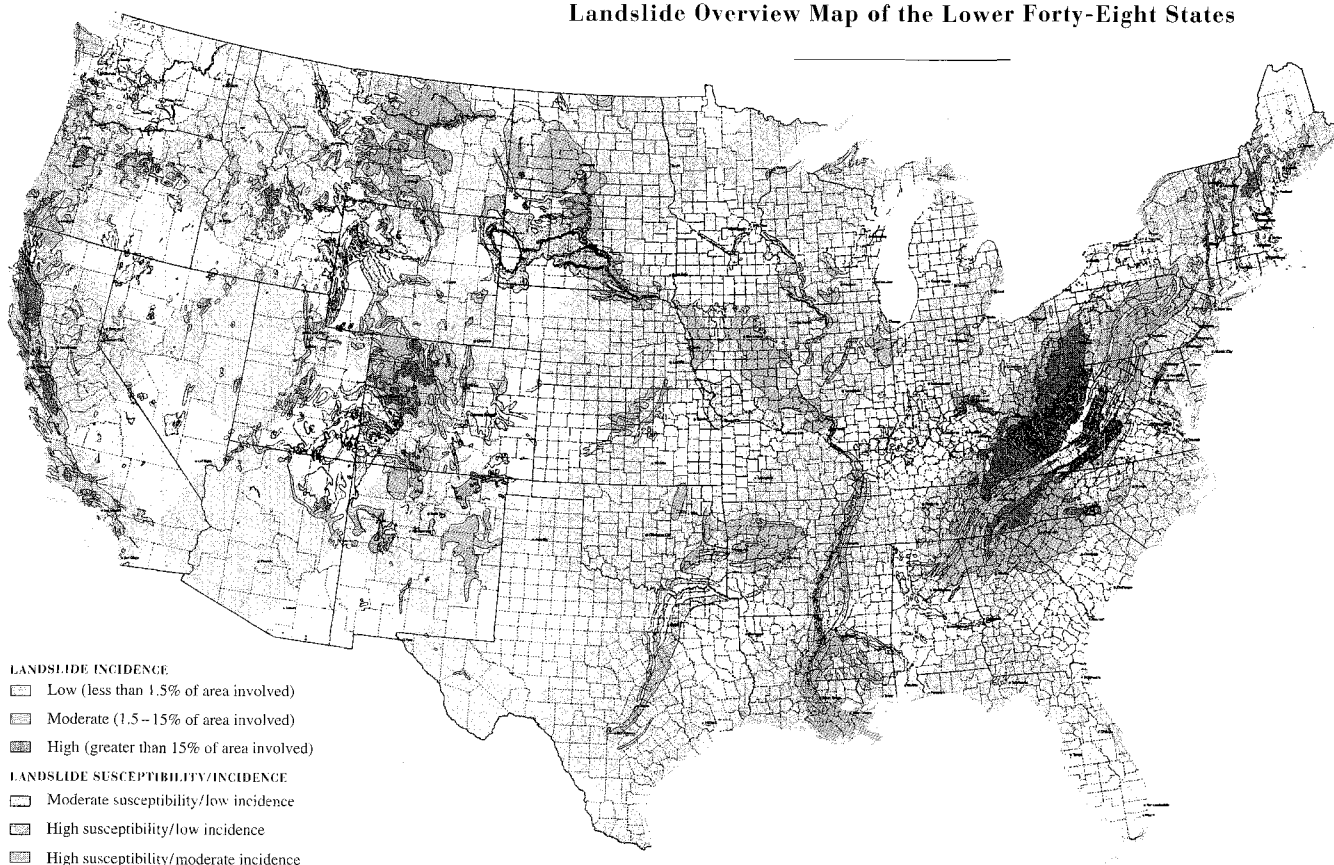
THE gloomy wet spring did nothing to dispel the sense of unease that lingered on Bainbridge Island long after the Rolling Bay slide. The idea of being swallowed up by the earth is profoundly unsettling. At first people had disturbing dreams—dreams of mud. They awoke at night to the malevolent sound of rain. With newly critical eyes they examined the waterfront houses of strangers. How close was the house to the cliff? Were the trees leaning? What caused those suspicious bare spots? For a time, envy abated.

February, March, April, May. The rain kept coming. It was the wettest year on record in Seattle. Roads closed, pipelines exploded because of shifting soil, more railroad tracks washed out, more

buildings slid down hills. In March a mudslide shattered another house on Rolling Bay Walk. No lives were lost—the beach was empty by then, so plainly unsafe that its occupants had fled. Of twenty-one houses, seven had been destroyed or badly damaged in a year’s time. Six more were red-tagged by the island’s building official as unsafe for occupation. Residents of most of the rest are strongly advised to evacuate when more than an inch of rain falls in twenty-four hours on saturated ground. After each disaster residents had nursed the hope—incomprehensible to outsiders—that it would be the last. The March landslide “kind of finished the neighborhood off,” Mary Clare recalled as we sat at her kitchen table. She was still limping from a leg injury that she had suffered during one of the evacuations from her home on Rolling Bay Walk.

Clare and her former husband bought their beach house in 1982. No one told them about the slides that had been occurring sporadically for decades. (Such disclosure isn’t required by law in Washington real-estate transactions.) “We

Landslide Overview Map of the Lower Forty-Eight States



knew there had always been some sloughing off," she said. "Not until the 1996 slide [when a house was destroyed five doors away from her own] did I find out it was dangerous." That year Clare took out a second mortgage and began to buttress her house against the moving cliff by rebuilding the foundation, stiffening the walls with plywood, and pouring so much concrete on the ground floor that it now resembles a dam—which, in a sense, it is. The bedrooms are on the top floor, overlooking the water, as far away from the face of the bluff as possible. The lower structure is a rigid box, engineered not to withstand a slide but to enable its occupants to survive one. Donald Tubbs, who mapped Seattle's hazardous slopes back in the 1970s, when he was a graduate student, and has been the geotechnical consultant for Rolling Bay's residents, says, "The house would move as one piece. It's what we call graceful destruction—it fails in a relatively benign way." Tubbs recommends that other houses be retrofitted in the same way.

Part of a retaining wall behind the Herren house still stands. The slide jumped right over it. To provide effective protection to the dozen properties most at risk, a wall would need to be twenty feet high and an eighth of a mile long, and would cost about \$1.5 million, Tubbs says. That's \$125,000 per owner. Another way to minimize slide risk is to cut away the face of the hillside entirely and stack a multi-story building against it, so that the structure functions as a retaining wall. "You can do that only with expensive construction," he says. "If you're Bill Gates, you can do it." Tubbs was a consultant for Gates's new \$60 million house, which sprawls across a hillside on the shore of Lake Washington.

The weakened bluff at Rolling Bay is now at great risk for more slides. Tubbs suggests that the remaining large trees be removed to eliminate the potential damage they could cause as projectiles; Dave Montgomery vehemently disagrees, arguing that removing them would further destabilize the cliff. No matter how one looks at it, the situ-

ation here is bleak. Assessed values on Rolling Bay Walk have plummeted by more than 90 percent; what used to be a \$300,000 house is on the tax rolls at \$11,000. "I can't sell the house—I can't give it away," Clare said. "I still owe all this money." She has spent \$130,000 to fortify a house that she has to leave during rainy periods. "After all this work," she added, "I still may not be protected from a slide as large as the one that hit the Herrens."

"There are probably a thousand homes built on some sort of filled beach at the bottom of the bluff," says Hugh Shipman, a coastal geologist with the Washington Department of Ecology. "They're not all as close to the toe of the slope as Rolling Bay, but some of them are. What do you do? You can't buy everybody out." Along with many of his colleagues, Shipman initially thought the Rolling Bay disaster would galvanize public agencies into dealing with the problem—perhaps by implementing stricter building codes or growth-management policies, or mapping the hazardous areas more precisely. Now he's doubtful that anything will change.

Hopes faded for a FEMA buyout of Rolling Bay when it became clear that the cost—\$3.2 million to buy the houses, tear them down, and clean up the beach—was too great, exceeding the hazard-mitigation funds available to any single jurisdiction as a result of the series of storms officially known as Presidential Disasters 1159 and 1172. FEMA funds have been used to bail out Washington farmers living in floodplains, but not people threatened by mudslides. Ironically, one of the reasons is that slides are too destructive. The premise of hazard mitigation is that it makes more sense to buy up properties than to pay for repairs again and again, but shallow debris flows tend to eliminate structures entirely. They leave nothing to repair.

Though privately underwritten landslide insurance is now impossible for Clare and her neighbors to obtain, federally subsidized flood insurance does cover certain water-caused landslides. In such cases the viscosity of the debris

flow is critical: the agent of destruction must be so liquid—about the consistency of a thick milkshake—that it cannot be shoveled. In other words, it must have the unique attributes of mud. Because the Rolling Bay slide satisfied that criterion, the Herrens' insurance paid for the loss of their home. What was not anticipated was that no one would survive to collect the money.

Dwight Herren's family has established a scholarship in his name for promising science students at the local high school, and the city of Bellevue, where Jennifer Cantrell-Herren worked as an urban planner, has dedicated a park playground in her memory. From boyhood Dwight was passionate about science; as an adult he was a deeply committed teacher, devoted to learning of all kinds. Jennifer, a staunch environmentalist, started Bellevue's recycling program. People now wonder how this intelligent, loving couple, so attuned to the earth and the sea, could have risked all for the sake of a view. But many others are making the same potential mistake. "There's nothing to say it couldn't have happened to any of a thousand other houses along Puget Sound," Donald Tubbs says.

The battered beach at Rolling Bay still reeks of sadness; it is impossible to imagine that the pall will ever lift from this particular shore. "Look this way and it's beautiful," Clare says, gazing at the gentle surface of the bay, sheltered from prevailing winds by a promontory called Skiff Point. "Look that way"—she inclines her head toward the fortified rear of her house—"and there's that sort of funny twist. That hidden danger."

The vacant lots will probably not be rebuilt; there's not enough room at the toe of the cliff to meet current standards. Still, memories are short. Events have proved that. As long as houses remain on the beach, as long as the views beckon, people will be tempted to push their luck. There could come a day—not soon, but someday—when the worry here is forgotten, when parents and their children sleep peacefully again in their brave houses by the water. ☼

When Evil Is “Cool”

by ROGER SHATTUCK

Our culture, in particular the institution of the university, has contrived over the past few decades to transform sin into a positive: transgression, a term that, as used by postmodern critics, refers to an implied form of greatness

I BEGIN with three stories, three moral tales.

■ ■ ■

IN LATE-MEDIEVAL Avignon a certain man gained the confidence and the warm friendship of a good-hearted and wealthy Jew. The man lived in the Jew's home and became his closest confidant. One evening the man came home in despair. He told the Jew that someone had denounced both of them to the Inquisition—the one as a despicable Jew, the other as a renegade from the only true religion. They would soon be imprisoned, tortured, tried, and burned at the stake. But the man had a solution. The Jew should sell everything he had and charter a fully equipped ship, onto which he could load his fortune. The two of them would quietly sail away to safer shores. All these plans were rapidly carried out. Then, during the night before the planned departure, the man rose stealthily, robbed the sleeping Jew of his last possessions, and slipped away aboard the ship with all its treasure.

But this is only half the tale, and does not reveal the full dimensions of the man's evil. Before escaping, this “friend” denounced his benefactor to the Inquisition and arranged that its agents would seize the Jew early on the morning of his own flight. A few days later the Jew died horribly by fire. His treacherous friend has come to be known as the Renegade of Avignon.

■ ■ ■

AT NIGHTFALL outside a remote New England village early in the nineteenth century, a lime-burner named Bartram was tending his kiln. Its flame-framed metal door looked like a private entrance to the infernal regions. An-

nounced by a frightening roar of laughter, the previous owner of the kiln returned after many years' absence. He declared to Bartram that he had found what he set out to seek: the Unpardonable Sin. Where had he found it? The wanderer laid his finger on his own heart and scornfully laughed again. Some local residents assembled to acknowledge, though hardly to celebrate, their fellow's return, and



to hear about his obsessive quest for the Unpardonable Sin. Strange omens during the evening, among them a dog's suddenly chasing its tail, suggested that the devil was lurking in the neighborhood. The guests had uncertain knowledge that the former lime-burner had carried out fiendish psychological experiments on young and old. Left alone, finally, to tend the kiln for the night, the wanderer recalled that he had not, properly speaking, *found* the object of his quest. Rather, he had *produced* the Unpardonable Sin.

For in seeking that knowledge, his fierce intelligence had separated from and outrun his heart.

In the morning Bartram did not find the returned wanderer. But in the hottest part of the kiln he discovered a snow-white lump of lime in the shape of a heart.

■ ■ ■

LIVING ALONE in a Paris garret, an idle young bohemian meditated on the sudden, perverse spurts of energy that can interrupt a life of laziness and boredom. Such urges lead one to unthinkable acts—such as starting a forest fire or lighting a cigar next to a powder keg—just to see what will happen, to tempt fate.

One morning the young man awoke in a mood to perform

such an outrageous act. Seeing below in the street a window-glass vendor, *un vitrier*, with his stock of panes in a pack on his back, he summoned the vendor to climb up the six stories to his garret. He asked for tinted glass, which the vendor did not have. In a rage the young man kicked the vendor back out into the staircase, where the tradesman almost stumbled under his heavy load. Then, watching from the balcony, the young man dropped a flower pot just as the vendor reappeared in the street, and thus broke his stock of glass to smithereens. This vicious prank might damn him, the young bohemian said to himself, but it also brought a moment of infinite bliss.

■ ■ ■

These three narratives cannot aspire to tragic or epic proportions. Their intimacy, combined with a certain mystery of the inexplicable, gives them the status of moral enigmas.

The Renegade of Avignon was not content to abscond with the good Jew's entire fortune; this traitor, who would be assigned to the lowest circle in Dante's *Inferno*, also contrived to have his victim burned at the stake. The story appears about two thirds of the way through Diderot's widely influential underground dialogue, *Rameau's Nephew* (1761). The parasitic, clowning nephew half jocularly and half seriously cites the tale to show how one can become a "great personage"—the Renegade displayed "unity of character" in his sustained viciousness. The nephew calls it "sublimity in evil," and enthuses over the deeds. His interlocutor, *Myself*, presumably speaking for Diderot, observes, "I don't know what horrifies me more, the villainy of your Renegade or the tone of voice you use to tell his story."

In the second tale many readers will have recognized Nathaniel Hawthorne's story "Ethan Brand" (1850). This dark tale implies that Brand has done unspeakable things to a local girl and to others, and has come to some understanding with the devil. But the essence of the Unpardonable Sin is neither of these. It lies in the sin of intellectual pride, in undertaking in the first place the search for the Unpardonable Sin. That overweening ambition turned Brand's heart to stone. "Ethan Brand" offers a strong parable of Forbidden Knowledge, in which the desired and prohibited goal is to discover ultimate evil.

The young Parisian who gratuitously and fiendishly victimized a poor glass vendor inhabited the imagination of Baudelaire in one of his prose poems, "The Unfortunate Glazier." Consisting of a few pages written around 1862, it may well have been read by Dostoevski, whose *Notes From Underground* (1864) sounds like a sustained recasting and elaboration of Baudelaire's vignette. In each of these works

the author created a principal character who approaches cruelty and crime as psychological and intellectual experiments. Cultivating their most selfish impulses, both characters reach a point of practicing sheer wickedness without purpose or cause. Neither commits a capital crime, but their logic could easily lead them in that direction.

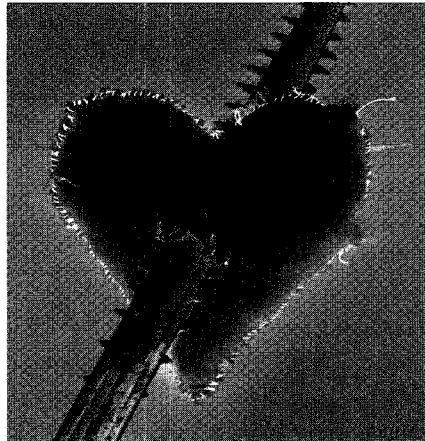
One thing these three tales establish is that evil comes in several forms. The Renegade of Avignon premeditated his

theft and his treachery over time. He plotted how to obtain the Jew's cooperation in his scheme and then how to eliminate his benefactor with hideous cruelty. The latter crime was largely unnecessary, a kind of maestro's flourish or fiend's laughter. That is the part of the story that Rameau's nephew finds sublimely evil.

Ethan Brand spent even longer than the Renegade in meditating on and finally carrying out his project—discovering the Unpardonable Sin, the ultimate evil, which not even the love of God can wash away. Presumably,

Brand believed that his quest would serve mankind and would bring him some form of reward and satisfaction for his devotion to a lofty goal. The story has a strong Faustian ring. But there is more evidence to consider. When Bartram saw Ethan Brand lay his finger on his heart to designate where he had found the Unpardonable Sin, the simple lime-burner came to a conclusion never denied elsewhere in the story: he must be dealing with "a man who, on his own confession, had committed the one crime for which Heaven could afford no mercy." Only after an offstage, undescribed point of no return did Ethan Brand comprehend that the terrible knowledge he sought in the world and in other people resided in himself. Curiosity and pride blinded him until the time for redemption had passed. The Unpardonable Sinner could now only return to his starting place and destroy himself by leaping into the inferno that had originally inspired his nocturnal meditations on evil.

Baudelaire's bored bohemian neither plotted a crime nor sustained any purposeful mental activity. Through the absence of meaningful occupation he became the victim of sudden willful actions that seemed to serve no personal interest. The reward he claimed was "*dans une seconde l'infini de la jouissance*." This instant of mental voluptuousness stands for a reverse epiphany, a negative transcendence toward baseness and inhumanity. All of us can feel and have felt this tug toward what is vile, and have yielded to it in varying degrees. The fragile compact we live by declares that we should not follow these impulses too often or too far. Baudelaire reported in formal verse and in prose poetry on his recurrent encounters with these reverse epiphanies, these glimpses into the abyss. His



power as a poet arises from the way his lines create tensely divided feelings about evil, composed of both fascination and revulsion. Rameau's nephew would have found nothing sublime about such an attitude—no unity of character.

EACH of these tales concentrates on a particular form of evil. And in each case evil has a strong presence, a perverse stature not reduced or redeemed by any other force in the story. Moreover, each story obliges us to ponder an implied greatness of evil—its claim on our admiration as a dynamic element of reality—and an implied greatness in evil of certain dark personages.

In order to deal with this vast subject on a small scale, I must leave aside major figures like Milton's Satan and Goethe's clownish Mephistopheles. Instead I shall comment on three short quotations that may concentrate the matter for us.

The complete text of one of Blaise Pascal's most troubling *Pensées* runs to four sentences.

Evil is easy. Its forms are infinite; good is almost unique. But there is a kind of evil as difficult to identify as what is called good, and often this particular evil passes for good because of this trait. Indeed, one needs an extraordinary greatness of soul to attain it as much as to attain good.

Elsewhere Pascal wrote insistently that man's greatness resides in his capacity to think: we are frail reeds, but reeds

capable of thought. What, then, is this unexpected and even inappropriate "greatness of soul," summoned from nowhere to explain a particularly rare form of evil? Did Pascal envision a moral and metaphysical mission like Ethan Brand's to search out a special form of evil that could pass for good? Possibly. But he provided too little evidence to guide our conjectures, offering a riddle without a solution.

Pascal's contemporary, François, Duc de La Rochefoucauld, wrote even more succinctly on the same moral question: "*Il n'appartient qu'aux grands hommes d'avoir de grands défauts*" ("Only great men can have great faults"). La Rochefoucauld did not write, "The greater the personage, the more destructive the faults." Perhaps that is presumed evident. Instead he introduced a pun on the word *grand*, or "great." *Grand*, like "great," can mean "worthy of admiration and respect," and also, more neutrally, "large in extent, big." "Great men" employs the first meaning, "great faults" the second. When the two are said together, we hear a certain moral greatness and worthiness being attributed to the faults of the great—that is, to evil. Has La Rochefoucauld given us something more profound than a flippant pun? I think he has. Through the ironies that sparkle in the word "great," he offers us a warning against the influence of such powerful figures. So crisp a maxim does not fade away.

The eighteenth-century English scholar and critic Samuel Johnson was, unlike Pascal and La Rochefoucauld, disinclined to reduce a complex moral quandary to a cryptic maxim and

PLEA FOR FORGIVENESS

The old man William Carlos Williams, who had been
famous for kindness

And for bringing to our poetry a mannerless speaking,

In the aftermath of a stroke was possessed by guilt
And began to construct for his wife the chronicle

Of his peccadilloes, a deplorable thing, a mistake,
Like all pleas for forgiveness, but he persisted

Blindly, obstinately, each day, as though in the end
It would relieve her to know the particulars

Of affairs she must have guessed at and tacitly permitted:
For she encouraged his Sunday drives across the river;

His poems suggest as much, anyone can see it.
The thread, the binding of the voice, is a single hair

Spliced from the different hairs of different lovers,
And it clings to his poems, blonde and dark,

Tangled and straight, and runs on beyond the page.
I carry it with me, saying, "I have found it so."

It is a world of human blossoming, after all.
But the old woman, sitting there like rust—

For her, there would be no more poems of stolen
Plums, of round and firm trunks of young trees,

Only the candor of the bedpan and the fouled sheet,
When there could no longer have been any hope

That he would recover, when the thing she desired
Was not his health so much as his speechlessness.

—RODNEY JONES

move on. In his *Rambler* essay on the modern novel (1750) Johnson stated the quandary clearly and then inserted a severe “but” that cuts in the opposite direction from Pascal’s “but.”

There have been men indeed splendidly wicked, whose endowments threw a brightness on their crimes, and whom scarce any villainy made perfectly detestable, because they never could be wholly divested of their excellencies; but such have been in all ages the great corrupters of the world, and their resemblance ought no more to be preserved, than the art of murdering without pain. . . . Vice, for vice is necessary to be shown, should always disgust; nor should the graces of gaiety, or the dignity of courage, be so united with it, as to reconcile it to the mind.

Johnson believed so strongly in the persuasiveness of literature that he disapproved of assigning sympathetic traits to immoral characters. This principle became the basis for his first criticism of Shakespeare: that the dramatist was more concerned to please us than to instruct us. I find Johnson’s aversion to villains of mixed temperament naïve and obtuse, if only for reasons of verisimilitude; we continue to expect fiction to be true to life in some essential way. But Johnson was dead right in insisting—as did Plato and Rousseau—that what we encounter as literature and as entertainment has a strong effect on us, not just on our feelings and imagination but also on our behavior. Nearly a century passed before a fully articulated doctrine of art for art’s sake came on the scene to separate art from life. More than two centuries later a free-market publisher and pornographer, Larry Flynt, has been heroized in a movie as a champion of free speech, has been invited to law-school debates, and has stated without challenge, “Adults can read anything they want without being corrupted.” Dr. Johnson’s understanding of human nature reached deeper than Larry Flynt’s.

I SEE four categories of evil.

Natural evil occurs in the form of elemental disasters and scourges, which may affect any of us and over which we have limited control. In the years immediately following the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 the intellectual and theological debate over the meaning of that event helped to shake the foundations of the Christian faith.

Moral evil refers to actions undertaken knowingly to harm or exploit others in contravention of accepted moral principles or statutes within a society. These actions are subject to judgment and punishment, mitigation and aggravation, repentance and remission. In societies that have been shaped by Western traditions, Greco-Roman law and Judeo-

Christian ideals merge in a gradually changing heritage that defines morality.

Radical evil applies to immoral behavior so pervasive in a person or a society that scruples and constraints have been utterly abandoned. The Marquis de Sade, the Soviet gulag, and the Nazi Holocaust belong to this form of evil, so extreme that it can no longer recognize its own atrocity. Lenin stated it forcefully: “The dictatorship means—learn this once and for all—unrestrained power based on force, not on law.”

Metaphysical evil designates an attitude of assent and approval toward moral and radical evil, as evidence of superior human will and power. Thus forms of evil arising from human agency are given a status as inevitable—effectively a reversion to natural evil. And thus the cruelest of monsters and tyrants are normalized in the perspective of history and in their evolutionary survival of the fittest. Metaphysical evil nullifies all attempts to establish constraints through law and social compact. The twentieth century has conferred astonishingly widespread respect for metaphysical evil by honoring the thought of Nietzsche.

Though such definitions and distinctions may supply us with ideas and nuances to argue about, I continue to find greater revelation about evil in narratives. Stories supply details of character, of setting, and of the passage of time, which are the essentials of our moral existence. When a number of cultures concur in identifying an author as profoundly illuminating about a particular aspect of life, we have good reason to read that author with attention. On the subject of evil Dostoevski has few close rivals. He frequently presented different versions of a single situation: the failed attempt

by an individual or a group to extend the moral evil of his or their actions into the purer and more intense domain of radical evil. Even *Notes From Underground*, behind its compulsive comedy and satire, sketches in a weak version of this situation. *The Possessed* and *Crime and Punishment*, in contrast, develop a strong version that overrides elements of comedy and satire. Dostoevski’s major works deal primarily with forms of evil and fanaticism released by “new ideas.” In this respect Dostoevski remains astonishingly

timely. His work occupies an essential place in literature curricula. Raskolnikov anticipates the essence and the allure of Nietzsche’s thought; his friend Razumihin and the police inspector Porfiry provide a mature rejoinder, both spoken and lived, to these destructive new ideas.

Anton Chekhov grew up in much the same society as Dostoevski, and through his medical practice and his professional familiarity with prison culture knew as much about

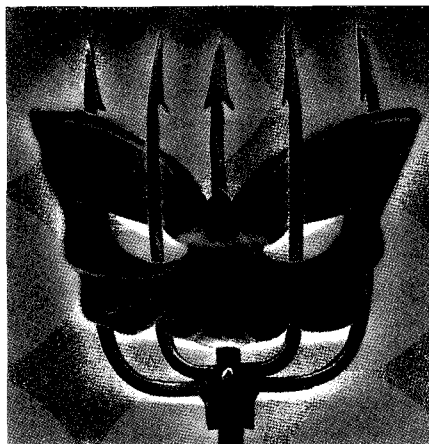


the underside of life as Dostoevski did. Why don't we turn to Chekhov, as we do to Dostoevski, to inform ourselves about the compulsions and the evasions of evil? Chekhov's plays and stories contain despair to the point of suicide, pointless and fatal duels, perfidy and deception in endless variations. Chekhov was essentially more of a realist than Dostoevski, whose force often lay in a strong proclivity to melodrama, caricature, and hallucinatory scenes. In an 1887 letter to M. V. Kiselev, Chekhov defended a story called "Mire," about a grasping provincial courtesan who half corrupts two intelligent and respectable cousins. Literature must be able to portray all of life, Chekhov insisted, including "the dunghill," even though the depiction of evil affects readers in very different ways. Echoing the French critic Hippolyte Taine, he said, "A writer should be as objective as a chemist." Yet Chekhov wrote this stout defense of literary freedom with reference to a singularly innocent story. In "Mire" the two cousins misbehave a bit, but their embarrassed laughter at their own behavior is an appropriate response to their social situation. "Mire" is almost too strong a title for a story in which evil emerges briefly from the milieu and is absorbed back into it. Even the stunningly self-reliant woman who impresses both men with her poise and talents seems more a challenge to stuffiness than a sinister and corrupting influence.

Like most of Chekhov's stories and plays, "Mire" is a work without a villain. Chekhov depicted everything, dunghills and all. Yet the self-deprecating, tentative actions of his characters leave the impression that in their weakness they exist as the victims of natural evil. Awful things happen, but no one must assume full moral responsibility for them. Not even Natasha, the most self-absorbed and unfeeling character in *Three Sisters*, fills the role of a moral agent driving the action, like Stavrogin in *The Possessed*. Chekhov dealt with evil, but he pushed it constantly in the opposite direction from that of Dostoevski, moving it through prolonged silences and inappropriate laughter toward natural evil, about which we can do very little. Dostoevski, with prolonged intellectual discussions and growing horror, moved evil toward radical evil and its self-justification. As a result, Chekhov is consoling to read, Dostoevski disturbing.

A YEAR ago a group of high school students in Pearl, Mississippi, conspired to murder some fellow students and their parents. (At least five incidents of school homicide have followed.) The dynamics of the group and the motives for the killings may never become entirely clear. But such an event is not unprecedented. Seventy-five years ago a similar

homicide and a celebrated trial shocked the nation. Nathan Leopold, age nineteen, and Richard Loeb, age eighteen, two precocious college graduates in Chicago, both from wealthy families, kidnapped and murdered Bobby Franks, a fourteen-year-old boy who lived in their neighborhood, and then tried to extort a ransom from the boy's family. As the result of their bumbling and some remarkable police work, they were caught, and they confessed.



The two youths were neither deprived nor mistreated. They could look forward to a brilliant future. Why this senseless crime? They sought a thrill, the kind of elation in a momentary experience that Baudelaire imagined. But they planned for it over a long time. They hoped it would demonstrate that they could conceive and carry out a perfect crime. And such a crime would demonstrate their superiority to, and exemption from, the ordinary laws of mankind.

The young men's defense was conducted by Clarence Darrow, the most famous trial lawyer of the era. He had them plead guilty without plea bargaining; that way they would appear before a judge alone. The hearing, with many witnesses for both sides, lasted more than a month. Having avoided an unwanted jury trial through guilty pleas that acknowledged the sanity of his clients, Darrow deployed witnesses and arguments to prove that the defendants were mentally impaired. In his magisterial summation, published in newspapers nationwide, Darrow cited the influence on Leopold of Nietzsche and his superman philosophy. He turned it into a mitigating circumstance. "Your Honor, it is hardly fair to hang a nineteen-year-old boy for the philosophy that was taught him at the university," Darrow said that the fact that Leopold lived and practiced the superman myth was evidence of a "diseased mind."

The most persuasive, finally successful part of Darrow's argument was against the inhumanity of capital punishment as no improvement over an eye for an eye. The judge sentenced Leopold and Loeb to life plus ninety-nine years. But along the way Darrow had stretched and even exceeded legal limits in his effort to transform guilt or conscious evil into insanity. The prosecutor, Robert E. Crowe, in his summation, quoted Theodore Roosevelt's response to a plea of insanity by a prisoner on death row: "I have scant sympathy with a plea of insanity advanced to save a man from the consequences of crime when, unless that crime had been committed, it would have been impossible to persuade any reasonable authority to commit him to an asylum as insane." No friend or familiar had ever considered Leopold or Loeb mentally incompetent before their crime. And Crowe felt com-

pelled to reveal Darrow's deepest convictions about the nature of crime. He read to the packed court and into the historical record a statement Darrow had made twenty years earlier to prisoners in the Cook County jail in Chicago: "The reason I talk to you on the question of crime, its cause and cure, is because I really do not believe the least in crime."

It sounded for a time as if Darrow were being put on trial. First, he partially excused the boys' evil actions by attributing them to the influence of Nietzsche's ideas, the ideas of a man who went mad. Second, he had publicly advocated ideas about social determinism and the nonexistence of crime and moral responsibility. These ideas, if accepted, would not merely mitigate the crime; they would undermine the entire judicial system in which Darrow was participating, and would eliminate from social relations any guiding principles of good and evil, sanity and madness, innocence and guilt. This disturbing revelation close to the end of the trial did not halt Darrow's juggernaut against capital punishment. But it demonstrated that highly articulate and influential people close to the criminal-justice system may entertain notions about the nature of evil and free will that are utterly at odds with the basic principles of that system.

The last story I want to examine is neither a literary work nor a court case. The movie *Pulp Fiction* (1994) represents several murderous episodes in gory detail, sets all the action in a criminal milieu where such episodes are considered normal and justified (with the exception of one awkward accident), and surrounds the incidents with small talk and compulsive wisecracking. After one has adjusted to the thick layer of obscenities, a frequently used four-letter word emerges as descriptive of the character trait being held up by the film for admiration: "cool." Mr. Wolf, the chief mobster's troubleshooter, efficiently and unflappably directs the cleanup of everyone's bloody mess and restores the normal order of crime. Mr. Wolf provides the nearest approach to a moral center in the story. He is supremely cool.

One brief scene, in which a character chooses the cruelest available weapon with which to escalate the already extreme violence of the scene, unmistakably satirizes the conventions of splatter films. He picks up and then rejects, one after another, a hammer, a baseball bat, and a chain saw, settling finally and triumphantly on a samurai sword. This is vaudeville. Is it possible that the director, Quentin Tarantino, intended to mock the film industry's crass exploitation of criminal violence? Some viewers and critics believe that he did. But the movie as shot and edited displays itself as complicit with the criminal violence it depicts. Except for the scene just mentioned, nothing suggests that this film sees around or beyond the horrible actions it portrays with the utmost cool. By depicting evil in this fashion the film neutralizes it—absorbs it into ordinary life, broken by a few thrills and laughs, and desensitizes us to evil.

After I had presented a similar analysis of *Pulp Fiction* in a lecture on Swift and satire, a few of my students defended

the movie vehemently as satire. They maintained that it sensitizes the audience to violence and crime. We did not persuade one another. I continue to find, after further viewings, that *Pulp Fiction* mitigates the behavior it represents, as Darrow tried to mitigate the evil deeds of Leopold and Loeb even after legally conceding their guilt. But in one respect *Pulp Fiction* carries us further away from responsibility and guilt than Darrow did. In the ideal of cool complicity in criminal violence lurks the suggestion, spotted by Pascal and La Rochefoucauld, of greatness in evil and of evil. Plausibly, a form of that greatness can be found in a few tragic roles. Aeschylus' Orestes kills his own mother to avenge her murder of his father. Orestes then undergoes the sufferings of exile, and of the Furies' wrathful pursuit, followed by ritual cleansing of his crime. In Aeschylus, however, greatness is less in and of evil than in overcoming evil and attaining wisdom. The cool of *Pulp Fiction*, in contrast, transports us first into the pervasiveness of radical evil and then back to Rameau's nephew's metaphysical evil—his approbation of the Renegade of Avignon. Evil is not overcome. Evil is accepted and admired.

I CLOSE with a troubling quotation from Emerson. Toward the end of "Experience," one of his most skeptical and disillusioned essays, Emerson made a remarkable statement about evil: "We believe in ourselves as we do not believe in others. We permit all things to ourselves, and that which we call sin in others is experiment for us."

The term "experiment," cousin to "experience," links Emerson's thoughts to Ethan Brand's search for the Unpardonable Sin and to Baudelaire's bohemian who indulges his perverse cruelty. And Emerson's transformation of objective sin into subjective "experiment" suggests a method of discovering greatness in evil, as imagined by Pascal and La Rochefoucauld. In this strongly observant passage Emerson appears to take no stand, to observe from afar. Then, a dozen or so lines later, comes a sentence that casts light on every case and every story I have cited: "For there is no crime to the intellect." I read that sentence as strongly cautionary to our era. Our culture, in particular the institution of the university, has contrived over the past few decades to transform sin and evil into a positive term: "transgression." As used by post-modern critics, "transgression" refers to conduct that aspires to Emerson's moral experiment and to an implied form of greatness in evil. On an intellectual level, which Leopold and Loeb feverishly extended into deliberate actions, evil can become supremely cool.

Let us beware of applying our intellects to condoning evil or to making ourselves into "splendidly wicked" people. Twice this century has spawned overwhelming state terrorism—in communism and in fascism. We cannot afford such blindness to history and such naiveté as to embrace the morality of the cool. ☞

The Next Best Kiss

by CAROL SHIELDS

TODD and Sandy had been friends for just a few weeks, and Sandy knew they were about to say good-bye to each other.

This thing between them was an episode taking place on a small screen. A mini-flick, as Todd would say, a scenario, a sketch. One million words had flown by, but nothing had been promised or declared, and Sandy could sense the way she and Todd were using each other up minute by minute, one talky voice drinking the other dry.

Both of them loved to talk—or, more accurately, they felt compelled to talk. A hypervocal compulsion was what they shared, according to their acquaintances, way up there on the glottal thermometer, and that was putting it kindly. This talkiness might be genetic, or it might be what was expected of them. They were both professors, he on the West Coast, she on the East; she was in history, he was in sociology/film studies/cultural exegesis. (“Professor of et cetera”—that was one of Todd’s little jokes on himself, almost his only joke.)

Friends introduced them to each other at the reception that launched the 1998 Darlington Conference, in Detroit, devoted to the subject of *fin de siècle* crisis. Todd gave a paper titled “End of the Self,” about the instability of the self, the self as the sum of incalculable misunderstandings, and the selfishness of even claiming a self. Todd confided to Sandy that the text for his talk might eventually find its way into *The New York Review of Books*, although the editors were asking for substantial changes, which Todd was questioning—and quite rightly, he said.

Sandy presented an afternoon seminar, “Diatribes and Discourse in the Twenty-first Century,” prophetic in its

pronouncements, spacy, brilliant (she hoped), loaded with allusive arrows (Lacan in particular), and followed by a vigorous Q-and-A session, with Todd, seated out there in the audience, contributing a number of thoughtful comments and reservations.

“He’s an asshole,” Sandy’s colleague Chloe said afterward.

“No,” Sandy countered, “not an asshole. Just an ass. One of those silly, old-fashioned asses.” She said this with a fond smile, all the muscles in her face and body relaxed for once. “Like our fathers were. Or our uncles. Total asses.”

“He talks in clauses, Sandy. You’re not supposed to *talk* in clauses. And especially not with semicolons intervening. I can hear those semicolons coming at me. Little squash balls hitting the wall.”

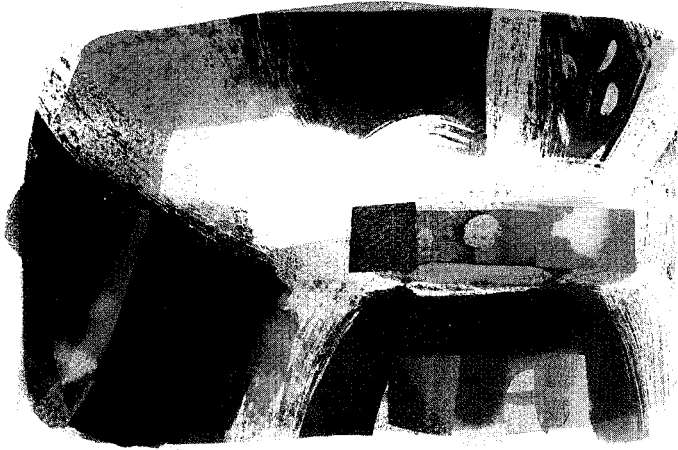
Sandy was still smiling; she couldn’t help herself. “There’s no law against semicolons.”

Since their first meeting Sandy’s jaws and Todd’s jaws



In another time, in a more exuberant century, sadness
was dignified; it was referred to as melancholy;
it was described as autumnal in tone and tinged with woodsmoke.
It was a real affliction, like color blindness
or flat feet

had not stopped moving. They had a verbal Ping-Pong game going, a monsoon, unstoppable. Sexually, they seemed to belong to the same nation—the strenuous, the informed, the adventurous, the currently unattached. On the other hand, anyone could see that they were far from being matched linguistically. Todd's ruminations tended to be speculative, Sandy's narrative.



For example: "We've probably said farewell to the world of sermons and to the clenched piety of holy pilgrimages," Todd said in his lecture, question marks hovering over his words like a jangle of surprised coat hangers. "We may soon be surrendering our sacred objects and perhaps the practice of prayer—even the notion of prayer."

"You seem to be hedging your bets a bit," Sandy told him after the presentation, not wanting to smother him in blanket approval—it was too soon for that. "The use of 'probably' and 'perhaps' and 'may be' and so on."

She had learned that women are obliged to interrupt their own discourse for the discourse of others, using standard probes and thrusts and "sincere" attempts at interrogation—the same strategies their mothers once used.

"It's ironic, but the *probable* now holds more force than the *certain*," Todd told her mysteriously, cradling her in his arms that first night, stretching his neck and kissing the tender place where her hairline met the back of her neck. "Because it more and more appears to be self-evident that nothing is really conclusive."

"You could be right," Sandy said. She was having trouble with her breathing and wasn't sure whether the cause was emotional or physical. Todd had a large, solid body. She appreciated its weight (she had been a long time between men and their bodily heft), but at the same time she felt vulnerable being pinned down like this.

"Everything's smaller now," Todd continued, minutely shifting his body. "Our idea of love is smaller. Our friendships are smaller."

"Yes," she said. "Emphatically. Why, back in the nineteenth century love was big stuff. As big as those balloons people used to ride around the world in. Now it's more like

the kind of grit that gets left behind in your jeans pocket."

"Yeah, sort of," Todd said.

He listened politely enough to her account of childbirth, the moment eleven years earlier when Jenny burst from her womb, as wet and compacted as a supermarket chicken with her folded limbs and tight whorls of dark hair, but Sandy, who liked to make a terse drama of her birth event, could tell that Todd's thoughts were elsewhere.

His eyes were squeezed shut, and he had gone suddenly critical in a pedagogical way that was quickly becoming familiar; his arms were around her, but in her imagination he was standing a few feet away, holding a clipboard in his hand and a microphone to his lips, analyzing her narrative structure and syntax.

"Womb?" he murmured. "Now, that's a somewhat romantic, nineteenth-century word to bring into a modern clinical procedure."

"It's not clinical at all," Sandy was about to say, but Todd started telling her about his automobile accident in Mexico—Baja California, to be exact—as though there were some connection between birth and highway injury.

Perhaps there was; the cooler half of her brain bleeped this possibility. Human tissue. Tearing and bleeding. Sudden intervention. She had noticed that people who have been in car crashes always get around to these stories fast. They love their accidents. Road disasters are like five-star movies in their lives, the only time they've been allowed to be major actors. "They had to pry open the door to get me out," Todd was saying. "The ambulance attendant kept saying it was a miracle I was still breathing." His voice went rough and shy with remembrance.

"It must have been terrible."

"Worse than terrible."

"How much worse?" She hoped she didn't sound as though she were mocking him.

"What?"

"I mean, how do we measure these things?"

"Do you always have to measure everything?"

A good question—or was it? "I suppose," she said slowly, easing his elbow off her upper arm, which was beginning to tingle, "that we do try to estimate the weight of experience in our lives."

"As if we can." He said this with a little snort that she found unaccountably piglike. He said it with disappointment.

"How else can we stand back and see where we are?" she said. "Or *who* we are?"

"Who we are." He echoed this observation lazily, without any fight in his voice or even a pull of breath. "You know that the 'who' of that particular question is something that absolutely cannot be isolated. Our identity shifts from one moment to the next, so that we are always in a state of becoming or diminishing."

Sandy set the "we" aside for the moment. As a historian,

she believed obstinately in the roundness and accessibility of events. Every date had a doorway, if you could only locate it. Every recorded birth and death had its corporeal and metaphorical dust, composed or else scattered, the little lost frights and ecstasies of fragile existence. And there was something else that lived on top of her thoughts: the notion that everyone had a mother, and from that mother, from that tight little purse with its fleshy space and opening lips, came the desire for expanded air and space.

She felt the need to say so, even if it meant risking a non sequitur. "Each of us has had a mother," she murmured into Todd's neck.

"Yes," he said, but clearly without taking in the weight of her thought. "True enough."

"And yours?" she said, prodding.

"My what?"

"Your mother. You haven't mentioned your mother. Not so far anyway. Is she, you know, living?"

"Living, breathing. Housewife. San Diego. Arthritis in her fingers. Goes to Bible study. Cooks turkeys."

"Mine too. Amazing. All that same stuff. Only it's Danville, Ontario, not San Diego." She didn't tell Todd that she had put as much distance between herself and her mother as possible, or that she broke into a sweat when she heard her mother's voice on the telephone.

"My mother worries about beetles getting into her breadbox," Todd went on jovially.

"Really?"

"It's only happened once, in 1946, I think, before I was born, but it's given her a reason to stay alive."

"Has she read your book on seismic stasis?"

"Ha!"

HOW reductive," Chloe said to Sandy, hearing about this conversation the next day. "Believing his mother's only worry is beetles in her bread. Her big worry is probably *him*. What a jerk she has for a son. Men who dismiss their mothers that easily can't be trusted."

"He said it rather sweetly, I thought."

"HE WOULD NEVER USE ONE WORD WHERE NONE WOULD DO"

If you said "Nice day," he would look up
at the three clouds riding overhead,
nod at each, and go back to doing what-
ever he was doing or not doing.

If you asked for a smoke or a light,
he'd hand you whatever he found
in his pockets: a jackknife, a hankie—
usually unsoiled—a dollar bill,
a subway token. Once he gave me
half the sandwich he was eating
at the little outdoor restaurant
on La Guardia Place. I remember
a single sparrow was perched on the back
of his chair, and when he held out
a piece of bread on his open palm,
the bird snatched it up and went back to
its place without even a thank you,
one hard eye staring at my bad eye
as though I were next. That was in May
of '97, spring had come late,
but the sun warmed both of us for hours
while silence prevailed, if you can call
the blaring of taxi horns and the trucks

fighting for parking and the kids on skates
streaming past silence. My friend Frankie
was such a comfort to me that year,
the year of the crisis. He would turn
up his great dark head just going gray
until his eyes met mine, and that was all
I needed to go on talking nonsense
as he sat patiently waiting me out,
the bird staring over his shoulder.
"Silence is silver," my Zaydee had said,
getting it wrong and right, just as he said
"Water is thicker than blood," thinking
this made him a real American.
Frankie was already American,
being half German, half Indian.
Fact is, silence is the perfect water:
unlike rain it falls from no clouds
to wash our minds, to ease our tired eyes,
to give heart to the thin blades of grass
fighting through the concrete for even air
dirtied by our endless stream of words.

—PHILIP LEVINE

"And I don't blame her one bit for not reading his book. Why the hell should she?"

"My mother read *my* book. She said I used too many big, show-off words."

"Really?"

"Who do you think you are?"—that's what she said."

"If I were you, I'd wind this Todd thing up, and fast!"

"It's easy for you to say," Sandy told her. "You have Bernard. I haven't had anyone for a long time."

"Does he make you happy?"

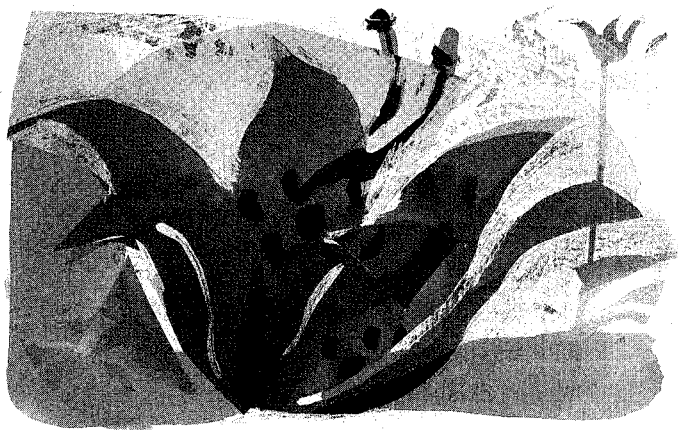
"Happy?"

"Now, Sandy, that's a simple, straightforward question. Yes or no. Does he make your happiness gland wiggle and beg for more?"

"No. But."

IT was summertime; Todd and Sandy were both free. He followed her back to Halifax and moved into the apartment she shared with her daughter. Just temporary, a few days. There was a heat wave. Then a cool wave. They spent a lot of time in bed—at least when Jenny was off at day camp. The rest of the day fell into a rhythm—reading the paper, cooking, shopping—that was comfortable, and that persuaded Sandy she was almost, in a summer kind of way, happy with her life.

At the same time, she had to admit that those twin demons, happiness and sadness, had lost their relevance. Happiness was a crock; no one, except maybe Chloe, really had it for more than a minute at a time. And sadness had shrunk, become miniaturized and narrowly defined, a syndrome, a pa-



thology—whereas once, in another time, in a more exuberant century, in a more innocent age, there existed great gusts of oxygen inside the sadness of ordinary people, carpenters, tradesmen, housewives, and the like. Sadness was dignified; it was referred to as melancholy; it was described as autumnal in tone and tinged with woodsmoke. Nobody got blamed for the old sadness. It was a real affliction, like color blindness or flat feet.

Matthew Hooke, for instance, could not be described as a happy man, and yet he was thought of as a valuable person in his society.

"Who actually is Matthew Hooke?" Todd had the courtesy to ask after a week or so.

"English botanist, 1809 to 1883."

"Yeah, right. The guy you wrote the book about."

"Uh-huh."

"Do you actually connect to this person? I mean, can he say to you anything that is actually meaningful? He's eighteenth-century—"

"Nineteenth-century." She had noticed that Todd was careless about dates.

"—and probably superstitious as hell and missing half his teeth. And here you are, this very twentieth-century woman who's lying in bed at three o'clock in the afternoon in a modern high-rise apartment in the middle of Halifax, and you haven't got any clothes on, just your skin against these sheets, and the traffic going by, and you turn your thoughts to this Hooke person—"

"Matthew Hooke."

"Right. Matthew."

"You sound jealous."

"What!"

"Jealous that I can be thinking of this mildly depressed but nevertheless intelligent and accomplished nineteenth-century gentleman at the same time you've got your hand between my legs."

"Well?"

"Well what?"

"Well, who's it going to be, then? Him or me?" He tried to express this thought as a joke, but he was not, as Sandy had noticed, good at jokes.

"So." She attempted a playful tone. "Do I have to make a choice?"

"What, exactly, was so great about this man anyway? What's he done to get a biography written about him?"

"It's not a biography. It's more of a contextual monograph. A background inquiry into what made him who he was—"

"Whatever that was."

"I'm just a tiny bit surprised you don't know his work. Don't take this the wrong way, but, I mean, this was a man who paralleled Darwin, and whose ideas—"

"Look, I don't happen to be in that particular field. Who can know everything?"

"He did."

"He did what?"

"He was one of those late, late, late medieval polymaths who extended right into the nineteenth century. He knew science, literature, classical languages, philosophy, architecture, music. And botany—well, that goes without saying."

"The epistemological world was smaller then."

"You are jealous, aren't you?"

TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

Big sound from a stereo radio—without the big price!

Zenith Audio, a leading electronics manufacturer designs a "Small Footprint", "Big Sound" stereo system and drives the price below \$100.

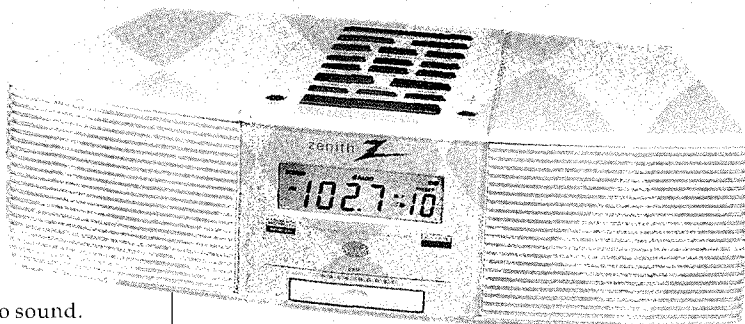
by John Jameson

I leaned back slowly in my chair with my eyes closed, listening to the haunting melody of a Mozart symphony. The acoustics were flawless, and the room was soon filled with full, rich stereo sound.

From the crisp highs of the flutes to the tooth-rattling bass of the kettle drums, the music was crystal-clear and powerful. I could distinguish the distinct sounds from each individual musician, and as the orchestra reached the finale I almost fell out of my seat from the awesome force of the music. As the music faded, I leaned forward and hit a button on the stereo clock radio. I had a concert to go to that night—it was time to check the weather.

Ultimate sound machine. Zenith Audio has developed a Digital Stereo Clock Radio that boasts the acoustic quality and practical features of stereo radios four times as expensive. You'll be amazed at the sound quality and powerful bass you get from a radio this small and this affordable. This stereo radio features an 11-key handheld remote control and an input jack for CD players or other audio sources.

The best bass. Many small stereo radios can sound tiny and weak. This unit has an exclusive EXB button for expanded bass performance. It intensifies the lower tones for CD or FM stations, giving you rich, full and powerful stereo



Micro-Electronic Sound Breakthrough

State of the art stereo sound quality in a stylish cabinet

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ AM/FM/TV Bands ■ Stereo Speakers with Crystal Sound System ■ Digital Weather Band ■ 37 Preset Station Memories | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ascending Tone Alarm ■ Wake/Sleep to Radio, Weather or TV Band ■ "Fail-safe" Alarm System |
|---|---|

sound. If you want to listen to the stereo in private, there is a headphone jack on the side of the unit.

Loaded with features. You won't find a tabletop stereo with more added options. The AM/FM radio features digital tuning for pinpoint reception and crystal-clear sound. The STEREO indicator allows you to tune in to the stereo signal. It also picks up TV and WEATHER signals with 13 TV channels and 7 Weather channels, so your Zenith Audio Clock Radio is a great source of news, entertainment and information. You can program the unit's memory for 37 preset stations, and the tuning buttons can operate either manually or in a automatic search mode.

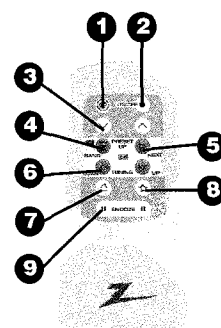
Practical functions. The backlit clock has several alarm functions, so you can wake to either radio, TV, Weather or a buzzer. The sleep timer allows you to fall asleep to up to 90 minutes of music, TV or weather and then shuts off automatically. In the morning, if you need a few extra minutes of sleep, press the SNOOZE bar on the control panel or on the remote. The radio or alarm tone stops for 10 minutes and then sounds again. The process can be repeated several times as required. The unit's battery backup system will maintain the time, alarm and preset station memories in the event of a temporary power interruption.

There is even a low battery indicator so you'll never oversleep in the event of a power failure.

Factory direct risk-free offer. You can spend hundreds of dollars more on a stereo radio, but why do it? We get the Stereo Clock Radio direct from

Zenith Audio and pass the savings on to you. This product comes with a one-year manufacturer's limited warranty and Comrad's exclusive risk-free home trial. If you are not satisfied for any reason, simply return it within 90 days for a full "No Questions Asked" refund.

- 1 Mute
- 2 Power
- 3 Volume
- 4 Band
- 5 Preset
- 6 Tuning
- 7 Alarm
- 8 Sleep
- 9 Snooze



11-key full function remote works up to 15 feet away.

The Zenith Crystal Clear Stereo comes in white or black.



Zenith Crystal Clear Stereo. \$99.95 \$12 S&H
Please specify white or black.

Please mention promotional code 4242-14678.

For fastest service, call toll-free 24 hours a day

800-992-2966

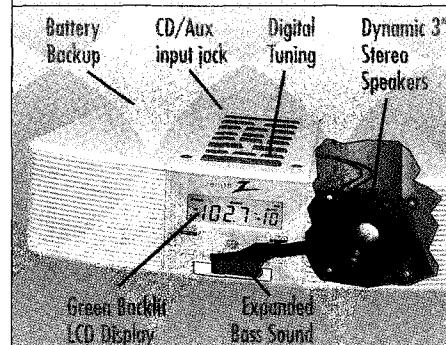


To order by mail, send check or money order for the total amount including S&H. To charge it to your credit card, enclose your account number and expiration date.

Virginia residents only—please include 4.5% sales tax.

comrad industries
2820 Waterford Lake Dr., Suite 102
Midlothian, Virginia 23112

Compact Speakers with a Big Sound



The Zenith Audio Clock Radio has an exclusive EXB button for expanded bass performance. It intensifies the lower tones for CD or FM stations, giving you rich, full and powerful stereo sound.

"It isn't as though he was Bach or Malthus or Kant or one of the great giants of human thought."

"He was an autodidact. A rustic from the wilds of Somerset. Never went to school."

"Oh, I get it. That's his excuse for being minor. He had hay coming out of his ears."

"Think of him as a synthesizer. That's how I describe him, anyway, in the book. Someone who skipped the heavy theoretical work and just talked about how plants looked, how they presented themselves. How they could change shape with a little encouragement."

"You don't need to be a genius to describe the various parts of a wood lily."

"Only a genius would think it's necessary to do so."

"What's that noise?"

"Oh, God, it must be Jenny letting herself in the door."

"Jenny already?"

"Yes," Sandy said carefully, heavily. "Day camp is over for today. As it has been every day at this time. Children are put on the bus and brought home by their counselors around about the middle of the afternoon. This happens all over the Western world."

"That's it, then, I suppose, for today."

She looked at him sternly, her schoolmarm look, and then let her face soften, pumping a theatrical puff of air into her cheeks. "There's always tomorrow."

TODD made a delicious macaroni-and-cheese supper for Sandy and Jenny, miles beyond the Kraft dinner they sometimes shared on busy days. Rattrap cheese, tender pasta elbows, real grated onion, salt and pepper, all this baked slowly in cream until crisp. Ordinarily Sandy didn't keep cream in the house. This cream was left over from the veal recipe she'd cooked for Todd on the weekend.

"Can we eat in front of the TV?" Jenny asked.

"No."

"Why not?" The beginning of a whine.

"Because we should use the time to talk. You haven't told us what you did at day camp."

"We did a folk dance—I told you already. What Irish people do."

"That sounds very interesting," Todd said. "Some of those dances go back hundreds of years."

"Yes," Sandy said. "That's true."

"Courting dances," Todd said. "Or, more primitive still, dances that celebrate signs of fertility—the beginning of men-
ses, for instance."

"So we did this folk dancing and then we did woodwork and then we had lunch and then we did birds and wild flowers and environment and then we waited for the bus to come."

"Well, maybe a little TV won't hurt. But only for half an hour."

"I know we agreed not to plunge into each other's history," Sandy said later to Todd, "and we've been pretty good about observing that pledge. But did you and your ex ever have children?"

"No," Todd said. "We thought about it a lot and we talked about it a lot. But it didn't happen."

"That's what I thought," Sandy said.

MORE and more, Sandy's men friends tended to be talky types, but perhaps they always had been. Her ex-husband, Jenny's father, Stephen, was a case in point: a man of bursting garrulousness, a physicist now employed at a research institute in Kansas City—thundering at his staff, no doubt, and filling the sedate laboratories with his galloping cadence. He was descended from a line of Missouri farmers who expressed themselves not sparingly, as country people are assumed to do, but colorfully, rapturously, endlessly, about crops, weather, and sports, and who exchanged the effervescent kind of quips that spin off from a more laconic tradition or else lean on common male assumptions: salesman jokes, penis jokes, beer jokes, jokes about city slickers or women's lib.

On the other hand, Stephen hadn't believed that every single issue under the sun warranted prolonged debate. The promotion of argument for its own sake sprang from a buried need for drama, according to Stephen. Talk should be a diversion, a pleasure, a pursuit, not something that spilled out of confession or declaration, so that the self was placed on trial. For instance, he, Stephen, did not plan to be in the labor room coaching Sandy when their baby was born. He wasn't at all frightened of the phenomenon, or repelled by it. He simply wasn't interested, period. Yes, he loved her and yes, yes, he would love the baby when it emerged, but he was not up to what he termed "the medical side of things."

His reluctance had seemed a big thing to Sandy at the time, a major betrayal that came to represent a number of other, smaller failings. Later she wondered why she had made such a big deal of it. Shouldn't she have appreciated the honesty of his response? "He's got a tongue on him," her mother had said, "but he won't ever bring you real trouble."

Later Sandy and her little Jenny lived for two years with a man named Christopher Swift, who sold computer stock. His was the kind of calling that demanded a quick phrase, a smooth delivery, a word-tumbling manner that forestalled interruption. The trouble was, he couldn't shut it off. He hovered over Sandy in the evenings, showered her with words on weekends, entertaining her, persuading her, pressing against her common sense, talking her into ridiculous ventures—a time-share in Hawaii, a hiking trip to Thailand, where Jenny nearly died of diarrhea and then dehydration.

There were others. Some lasted a matter of days. Mike Something-or-other and his philosophical divagations. He

was a man who could turn a glimpse of an ordinary tree or shrub into an instant thesis on the insularity of the soul or the hermeneutics of regeneration. Toby Shawn (six months) was given to meditations about his grandfather's incivility, his mother's spite, his brother's fecklessness—a circle of incrimination that widened endlessly and came to include, to no one's surprise, Sandy and eight-year-old Jenny. There was no refuge.

On lonely nights Sandy would head for the neighborhood video store, where she rented old movies, particularly those from the forties, a time when her parents were children growing up. She would make a pot of tea, hunker down on a pile of cushions, and sit up half the night, eyes stuck to the screen, eager for the fiction of how men were once believed to behave.



She was particularly drawn to that American icon known as the strong, silent type, and a hopeful part of herself prompted her to believe that such men actually existed off the screen. Didn't Hollywood effusions, for all their carelessness, persist in the refining and sharpening of our vision of ourselves? That period creature the silent male did not babble or condemn or theorize or hold forth. He might open his mouth from time to time and speak when required, a dense, manly rumble in his throat introducing a terse, tender monologue of withheld energy, but he was not at any point bent crooked with the weight of his opinions. Instead his bone marrow quietly tapped into the world around him, the suppressed words subtly infantilizing his sexual bulk, so that you wanted to hug him like a baby and at the same time bed him down for a night of breathless, wordless, stunned satisfaction.

That was how it was in the old days, if you chose to believe it.

SANDY got a postcard from Chloe and Bernard, who were in Maine, stating, in Chloe's private cryptography, "Hope you're well out of the claws of Mr. Clause."

Everyone was surprised that Todd hung around right up until early September, when classes began at San Diego

State, and that the usually impatient Sandy was not altogether exasperated by his presence. He fit in, more or less. He took Jenny to a dinosaur movie and out for pizza afterward. His theory about the slippery self, its detachment from any fixed point of proof, had its own virtues, and even its comforts—at least for Sandy. Why should we be tethered to our inherited packet of DNA and to the tyranny of our mothers' and fathers' good intentions—what they might have done, what they could have said, if only they had been smarter, kinder, more feeling, less selfish? Does anyone apprehend human vibrations when they are filtered through choked time waves and genetic matter? How much can we know we know?

She had work to do at the end of the summer, lectures to prepare, her office to set in order. While she was out of the apartment, Todd busied himself reading about Matthew Hooke. He did this on the sly at first, working his way straight through Sandy's shelf of Hooke literature and then, finally, reading her book, *Matthew Hooke: Silent Visionary*. He restrained himself, he later told Sandy, from making his usual marginal notations.

"What kind of notations would you have made?" She was surprised at how nervous she suddenly felt.

But all he said was, "Just the usual queries. Like 'Is this statement supported?' Or 'More information needed here.'"

She decided not to take this as a criticism. She decided to imitate the evenhanded, nonjudgmental woman she aspired to be. "Well, you've probably noticed that there isn't a lot of hard information about Hooke's life."

"Yes, I did notice."

"The only thing to do was to fill in around the edges with the historical background."

"Right."

She looked at him. "Eccentrics don't often leave complete records. They don't think they need to be forever explaining themselves."

In fact, his botanical journals aside, almost nothing was known of Matthew Hooke, nineteenth-century botanist, other than that he seldom spoke.

"Good day," he is believed to have said when presented to the Royal Court and honored for his accomplishments in crossbreeding peas and, some years later, broad beans. He delivered his minimalist greeting, according to Sandy's text, not in the innocent manner of a rustic but in the full knowledge that his accomplishments released him from heavier forms of tribute or obeisance. He never married, never had children. He appeared to have lived without the consolation of sex—he who dabbled so happily, so tirelessly, with the tender male and female parts of plants.

Others who inhabited the same southwesterly English village as Matthew Hooke, a place called Little West Nutley, or sometimes simply West Nutley, knew him as a man of silence. Was he perhaps even simple, they might have won-

dered—a man so stretched by intensity and so out of joint with other human creatures that he misread the demands of common intercourse? The comments of his neighbors regarding his taciturnity were, of course, apocryphal, as was almost everything about poor Hooke's life: how he discovered his bent for natural science, how he overturned contemporary ideas of hybridization, how the tug of his thought moved ever toward the useful and practical, without losing for a minute the undertow of biological miracle.

"The kissing part took me by surprise," Todd told Sandy.

"Of course, we don't know quite how to read that aspect of his life," Sandy said. "I mean, we don't really know how weird or non-weird that kind of behavior was."

"I'd say it was very, very weird," Todd said.

The kissing part was revealed in a single sentence inscribed by an unnamed West Nutley vicar who had undertaken to write a sort of village history. "Good Mister Hooke speaks to no one excepting his pea blossoms," the vicar wrote, "but does love to kiss the ladies whenever an occasion is given."

"The guy was a pervert," Todd told Sandy. "A rapist manqué."

"I don't see it that way," Sandy said crossly.

"Leaping out of the bushes at ladies! Come on, now. Admit it."

"There's nothing in the text about leaping out of the bushes."

Sandy felt sure that Hooke's advances, if that's what they were, amounted to an innocent hunger for women's flesh—quick, dry kisses, aimed at the cheek or perhaps even the lips, shyly stolen, timid yet assertive, silent pressings, silken, a curious mouth seeking forbidden tenderness, requiring that fleet conjunction for its own sake and not for where such a kiss might lead or even what it might declare. A Hooke kiss would be enclosed by its own small muscular effort and release, and by the impossibility of an explanation outside the momentary refreshment that it offered. Its savor would break through the common parochial strictures like a new form of cloud and be permitted, even smiled over. Touch me, touch me, let me touch you in this simple, explicit way—that's all it would say. (Sandy had read somewhere that earthworms kiss, their frontal parts briefly waving, nodding at each other. Mosquitoes, too, and houseflies, if the evidence could be believed. They caught each other in midair—a fraction of a second only, but a connection nevertheless.)

"You and your friend Chloe would have him up for sexual abuse if he wandered around Halifax stealing kisses."

"Maybe not. Maybe I'd like one of those stolen kisses myself. Maybe I'd feel honored to be a recipient. Or maybe I'd think it was just, you know, sort of hilarious, but at the same time okay."

"So you believe that Matthew Hooke's personality was outside the margins. Psychologically speaking, I mean."

"Maybe. But not because he kissed ladies." She gave the word a cockney spin: *lie-dees*.

"What about his not talking?"

"I think I can understand that."

"Really! You! So you don't think he was even a little bit weird?"

"Well." She wanted to be fair. "There is that business about living with his mother."

"What business?"

"No particular business—just that he lived with her."

"Why shouldn't he live with her?"

"A grown man living with his mother. It's just—"

Sandy felt the conversation running out of control. She didn't know what it meant or who was defending whom, but she'd been here before often enough to understand how the most intricate arrangements can be dismantled by a single uttered phrase. Something hovered in the still air between Todd and her, a cloud of unbreathed thought, no bigger in size than a cantaloupe, or a human fist.

Then he said, "I live with my mother."

"Oh." Another skipped beat. "You didn't mention . . . I didn't realize."

"And I'll probably go on living with my mother."

"Oh."

"I didn't know it would matter to you. Or maybe I did know, and that's why I didn't bother to mention it."

"It doesn't mean a thing, not at all, really. You've completely misunderstood me, Todd. I have nothing against men who live with their mothers."

"Tell me about it." He said this as though his mouth were full of bitter coins.

This discussion took place on their last night together. For hours afterward they lay silent on Sandy's bed, neither one of them really sleeping, and in the morning they rose to an even deeper silence, a silence she found painful but also dignified and somehow admirable. They moved politely around the apartment, two civilized adults, one of them preparing for an early flight, closing his suitcase, checking his ticket, attaching his E-mail address to the fridge with one of Sandy's rubberized fridge magnets. She made him toast and coffee, and then drove him, in silence, to the airport. The idea of an embrace seemed obscene. Shaking hands would have been ludicrous. All he said in parting was "Be sure to say good-bye to Jenny."

And give my love to your mother.

This is what Sandy told Chloe when they were having lunch a week later. "That's what I almost said to him—*Give my love to your mother*. The words were just about to hop off my tongue."

"What stopped you?"

"I don't know. I was afraid I might laugh. Or else cry. I mean, I'm a woman who doesn't know where her next kiss is coming from." ☞



A Cataclysm of Thought

In 1905 Albert Einstein, a twenty-six-year-old clerk, published five epochal papers. One was later awarded a Nobel Prize. Reading them today, our reviewer is thrilled by their genius

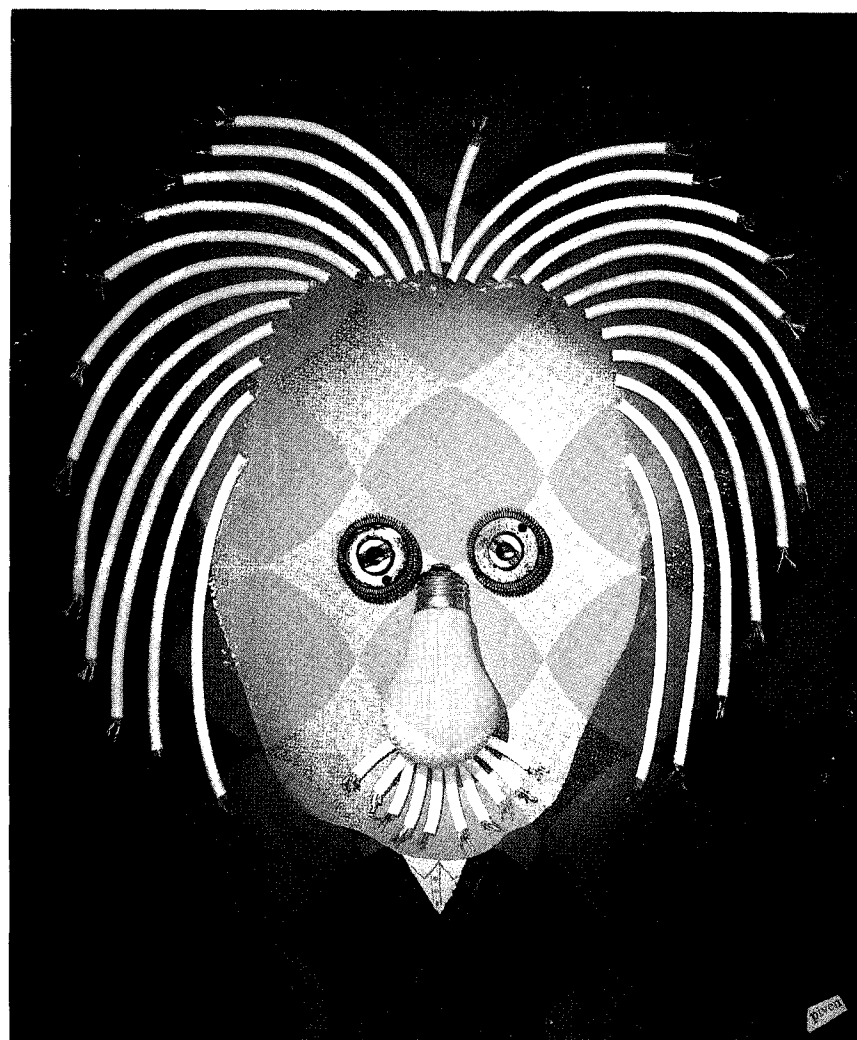
by Alan Lightman

**EINSTEIN'S
MIRACULOUS YEAR:
Five Papers That Changed
the Face of Physics**

*edited by John Stachel.
Princeton University Press,
216 pages, \$19.95.*

I'VE often been struck by the fact that philosophy students read Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, political-science majors read the U.S. Constitution, and literature classes read Shakespeare, but students of science rarely read the works of Mendeleev or Lavoisier or Einstein. The widely used college textbook from which I learned mechanics, the area of physics whose foundations were laid largely by Isaac Newton, contains a beautiful exposition of classical mechanics but only a handful of mentions of Newton, no excerpts from his *Principia*, and no pages at all on the history of the subject. From this one observation an intelligent creature from outer space could determine that there exists a profound difference between the disciplines we call natural science and those we call humanities or art or social science. Modern textbooks on science give no sense that scientific ideas come out of the minds of human beings. Instead science is portrayed as a set of current laws and results, inscribed like the Ten Commandments by some immediate but disembodied authority.

This absence of history is not entirely a bad thing. Science prides itself, with much justification, on its claim that the final equation or experimental result is far more important than the path taken to achieve that result or the views of the scientist in arriving there. The "objective"



nature of scientific results, free from the fingerprints of their discoverers, helps great scientific ideas to attain their universality and staying power. Every day electrical engineers can successfully apply Ohm's law without knowing who Ohm was or that he struggled with messy piles of metallic disks and moist cardboard to reach his discovery. Moreover, new mathematical methods are brought

to bear, and ideas and results are revised or recast as the subject advances. It would be a decided burden on students to relive much of the outmoded history. Over time science has proved itself to be a vertical subject, and most science students and their teachers want the latest, right off the top. The record of trial and error and the dusty original papers can always be attended to by historians.

So, twenty-five years after my days and nights as a physics major, I have on my desk a small book containing five papers published by Albert Einstein in 1905—on the sizes of atoms, relativity, and quantum theory. And I find myself thrilled by these papers. Why? Because through the original choice of words and arguments, through the simple but profound ideas and thought processes, even through the errors (yes, Einstein sometimes published errors), I have been able to gaze into the mind of this great scientist in a way that no distillation or restatement or commentary would allow. In these papers one can see an enormously gifted human being grappling with the nature of the world. The physics and mathematics are too technical for all but professional physicists, and the level of genius is practically incomprehensible. But in the discussion of ideas and in the deep questioning and hesitations one recognizes a fellow thinker at work.

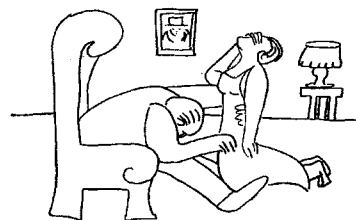
Einstein's Miraculous Year draws its material from the second volume of *The Collected Papers of Albert Einstein*, a mammoth collaboration of the Einstein Papers Project at Boston University, Princeton University Press, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The plan is to publish all of Einstein's scientific papers and political writings and much of his available correspondence—more than twenty-five volumes' worth—both in original form and in English translation. The papers here first appeared in the prestigious German physics journal *Annalen der Physik*, all within a single year.

In 1905 Einstein was a poor twenty-six-year-old clerk in a patent office in Bern, Switzerland. He and his wife, Mileva Marić, had in 1903 given away a daughter named Lierserl, who was born before their marriage; they now lived with their infant son, Hans Albert, in a two-room rented apartment on 49 Kramgasse that could be reached only by a steep staircase. At this time the brilliant young physicist felt estranged from the world. He had renounced his German citizenship at the age of sixteen, out of contempt for the authoritarian German military and his impending draft. In addition he suffered under his parents' disdain for his wife, who was Serbian and was four years older than Albert. (His mother once said to him, "She is a book like you—but you ought to have a wife.

... When you'll be 30, she'll be an old witch.") And since graduating from the Federal Institute of Technology, in Zurich, in 1900, he had repeatedly been refused jobs in Europe's academic establishment, many of whose eminences he considered self-satisfied men far below him in scientific ability. The young Einstein was an embattled loner. Yet although he was unemployed much of the time in the years immediately following his graduation, he managed to publish several scientific papers. Then, in 1905, still working in obscurity, he produced five articles that changed physics for all time. Any of these papers would have brought him lasting recognition. One earned him the Nobel Prize. Two provided definitive new evidence for the existence and sizes of atoms and molecules; two proposed a radical new conception of time and space (the special theory of relativity) and tossed out as a by-product the famous formula $E=mc^2$; and the fifth gave the first theoretical evidence that light flows in discrete packets of energy, like water droplets, rather than in a continuous stream. Surprising to me, it was only this last paper that Einstein himself referred to as "revolutionary."

At the end of the nineteenth century, physics basked in the glow of extraordinary achievement. Newton's laws of mechanics, which described how particles respond to forces, together with his law of gravity had been successfully applied to a huge range of terrestrial and cosmic phenomena, from the bouncing of balls to the orbits of planets. The theory of heat, called thermodynamics, had reached its climax with the melancholy but deep second law of thermodynamics: any isolated system moves inexorably and irreversibly to a state of greater disorder. Or, alternatively, every machine inevitably runs down. All electrical and magnetic phenomena had been unified by a single set of equations, called Maxwell's equations after James Clerk Maxwell, the nineteenth-century Scottish physicist who completed them. Among other things, the equations demonstrated that light, that fundamental natural phenomenon, is a wave of electromagnetic energy, traveling through space at 186,000 miles per second. The new areas of physics known as statistical physics and kinetic theory had shown that the

THE BOOK NOBODY IN WASHINGTON IS READING



Is Sex Necessary?

BY JAMES THURBER & E. B. WHITE

This 1929 classic, which was the first book for each master humorist, remains timelessly funny. Our newly-published, paperback COMMON READER EDITION is \$15.00 postpaid.

To order, or to request a free copy of our distinctive monthly book catalog, call 1-800-832-7323.

www.commonreader.com

A Common Reader
where books belong

UNABRIDGED AUDIOBOOKS

for a free catalogue, write or call:
Dept. A • P.O. Box 969 • Ashland, Oregon 97520
1-800-729-2665
<http://www.blackstoneaudio.com>

BLACKSTONE AUDIOBOOKS

AFRICA • CHINA • INDIA • JAPAN • NEPAL

UPTON TEA IMPORTS
Since 1989
Purveyor of the World's Finest Teas

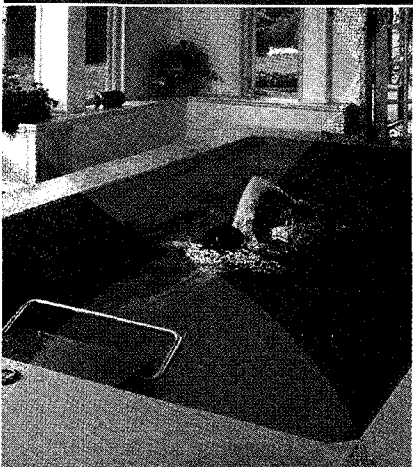
Free catalog listing over 120 varieties of garden-fresh, loose tea
1-800-234-8327
P.O. BOX 159-C • UPTON, MA 01568

Active Learning Vacations in Alaska's Denali National Park

CAMP DENALI NORTH FACE LODGE

907-683-2290 dnpwild@alaska.net
www.gorp.com/dnpwild

Swim at Home™



Think Of It As A Treadmill For Swimmers!

Swim or exercise against a smooth current adjustable to any speed in a unique pool measuring only 8' x 15'. Enjoy the fun and convenience of the world's best exercise at home year 'round. Ideal for swimming, water aerobics and rehabilitation. Compact size makes the dream of pool ownership practical in small spaces. The Endless Pool™ is simple to maintain economical to run, and easy to install inside or outdoors. New system reduces chlorine use by 90%.

Free Brochure!
Call 800-732-8660
or 610-497-8676

Visit our web site at
www.endlesspools.com
 or write Endless Pools, Inc.
 200 E Dutton Mill Rd
 Dept. 365
 Aston, PA 19014



behavior of gases and fluids can be understood on the basis of collisions between large numbers of tiny objects, assumed to be the long-hypothesized but invisible atoms and molecules.

This detailed knowledge enjoyed by late-nineteenth-century physicists was accompanied by a world view, much of which was so obvious as to be left to the unconscious. First and most important, the physical cosmos was subject to rational laws, and those laws could be discovered by humankind. (Volumes could be written on this.) Next, all substance was composed of energy and matter. Energy, like light, came in a continuous form; it could be subdivided indefinitely into smaller and smaller amounts. Matter, however, such as rocks, came in particulate form and consisted of a limited number of indivisible objects—atoms. A piece of matter could be subdivided only until individual atoms were reached and no further.

It was also believed that a gossamer substance, called the "ether," filled all of space and was the medium by which light traveled. (It was thought that light waves could not propagate through a vacuum any more than sound waves could; thus the postulation of the ether.) Although this belief may seem highly particular, it implicitly required the profound notion that there exists a condition of *absolute rest*. According to wave theory, one can always measure one's motion relative to the medium that propagates a wave, and one knows in particular when one is at rest in that medium. For example, water waves appear to travel more slowly if one moves along after them rather than remaining still in the pond. Physicists reasoned that if an ether pervaded all of space, as it must for our eyes to perceive the twinkling of distant stars, then experiments with light should always reveal how the earth was moving through the ether; the all-pervasive ether would thus constitute a condition of rest against which all motion could be measured. Both Aristotle and Newton subscribed to the belief in absolute rest. For Aristotle, it was the earth, lying at rest at the center of the cosmos, that provided the fixture against which motion could be measured. For Newton, the pervasive substance at rest was the Being of God, who "by existing always and everywhere . . . constitutes duration and space." For

nineteenth-century physicists, it was the ether that was at rest.

Finally, physicists and everyone else believed in the absolute nature of time: a second for me is a second for you. Time flows at an equal and absolute rate always and everywhere. This belief was so eminently reasonable, so ingrained in human experience and perception of the world, as to be beyond question.

In sum, as the nineteenth century entered its last decade, physics surveyed its vast kingdom and was pleased. Some cracks, however, were appearing in the marble façade. Huge and unexplained quantities of energy had recently been observed emanating from certain elements—the phenomenon called radioactivity. Other emissions of radiation, the so-called atomic spectra, exhibited surprising regularities, but no one had arrived at a theoretical understanding of them. And in 1897 physicists identified a new building block of matter, tiny in size: the electron, which was evidently ejected from the innards of atoms. Was the sacred and indivisible atom divisible after all? Henry Adams shrieked over this possibility in his *Education*.

On another front all attempts to probe the hypothetical ether had failed. Yet wasn't an ether necessary for the propagation of light? Experimental physicists had also observed that a unique kind of light emerged from all hot, blackened cavities held at a constant temperature. The detailed nature of this light, called black-body radiation, was completely independent of the size, shape, or composition of the cavity—as surprising as if human beings all over the world were to utter the same sentence upon being asked a certain question. Clearly, black-body radiation held some secret about the fundamental nature of matter and energy, but physicists had little clue. Another puzzle with disturbing implications appeared under a microscope: tiny particles suspended in a fluid seem to dance to and fro endlessly—a phenomenon first documented by the botanist Robert Brown and called Brownian motion. No one had given a satisfactory explanation for the phenomenon. Furthermore, because the second law of thermodynamics states that all such motion eventually grinds to a halt, some physicists proposed a failure of that law for microscopic dimensions.

Amid many successes these basic questions about the nature of atoms, matter, and energy deeply troubled such prominent physicists as Ludwig Boltzmann, Max Planck, and Hendrik Antoon Lorentz. Onto this stage of certainties and uncertainties stepped the young Einstein in 1905. By the end of the year little was left standing.

THE five papers have an uneven geography, being spare and mathematically dense for long stretches and then opening out into essayistic prose on matters of principle. One can almost see the journal editors wincing at some of the verbiage. Here and there Einstein summed up prior experimental and theoretical results in general terms, but he made surprisingly few references to the existing physics literature. One might be tempted to attribute this omission to his isolation from the academic establishment in 1905 if the feature was not apparent throughout his later work. A more plausible explanation is that Einstein was not especially influenced by this or that particular result but instead was guided by the big picture as he saw it.

What delighted me about Einstein's two papers on atoms and molecules was his unflinching confrontation with experiment. Here was a great theoretician authoritatively deriving equations for the way in which small spheres budge the fluid flow around them, yet when he arrived at a final result with x s and y s, he did not simply tuck away his pencil and paper, as many theorists do, but inserted actual laboratory numbers to make definite predictions. For example, at the end of his paper on Brownian motion, titled "On the Motion of Small Particles Suspended in Liquids at Rest Required by the Molecular-Kinetic Theory of Heat," he derived an equation for the distance a suspended particle should travel in time t after bouncing back and forth owing to random collisions with individual molecules of the surrounding liquid. The equation shows that the tinier the surrounding molecules (and thus the more of them), the smaller the expected jitter of the suspended particle in a given time. If matter were infinitely divisible, and atoms infinitely small, a suspended particle would not jitter at all. Thus the mere observation of Brownian motion testifies to the existence of atoms and

CLASSIC ELECTRIC TRAINS

märklin



FROM MÄRKLIN TRAINS, the world leader in model railroading, comes MAXI the large scale all-metal train. Classically styled with a realism only imagined with other large scale trains, MAXI is built to withstand a lifetime of serious indoor or outdoor fun. In fact, MAXI will remind you of the classic trains you owned as a child. Available in both American or European prototype starter sets, MAXI is the perfect gift for your child, grand-

child, or even yourself. Be sure to ask your dealer about our holiday rebates on starter sets.

Precision manufacturing, technical innovation and attention to detail have made Märklin trains the most sought after trains in the world. For more information and the location of your nearest dealer, give us a call at **1-800-825-0888**, or check us out on the Web at www.märklin.com/maxi.



LET MAXI TAKE YOU TO HAWAII!

See your dealer for details.

AM 1-9

Märklin, Inc. is the American Subsidiary of Gebr. Märklin & Cie. GmbH, Germany and Exclusive Distributor in North America for Märklin Products

THE ATLANTIC at THE ALGONQUIN

The Atlantic Monthly sponsors "The Spoken Word," a series of intimate cultural evenings at the famous Algonquin Hotel, in the center of Manhattan's theater district. "The Spoken Word" features critically acclaimed writers, critics, actors, musicians, and other luminaries in an unrehearsed discussion of their endeavors, every Monday evening in The Algonquin's celebrated Oak Room.

Please join us for an upcoming evening sponsored by The Atlantic Monthly:

MONDAY • JANUARY 18

Verse & Variations

The internationally recognized pianist John Kamitsuka will perform Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. The program features interludes of poetry read by Karl Kirchwey, the director of the Unterberg Poetry Center, at the 92nd Street YM-YWHA. Authors will include Auden, Shakespeare, Keats, and Eliot.

MONDAY • FEBRUARY 22

A Room of One's Own

by Virginia Woolf

Adapted by Patrick Garland

Directed by Daniela Varon

Tod Randolph plays Virginia Woolf, a role that won her wide acclaim in the Shakespeare and Co. and Stables Theatre productions.

"If we have the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think...then opportunity will come."



Seating for dinner: 6:30 p.m.

Presentation: 8:00 p.m.



The Algonquin Hotel • 59 West 44th Street • New York, NY 10036

CALL 212-840-6800 FOR RESERVATIONS OR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

WOW! I Can't Believe You Have That CD!

EveryCD is a wholesale music club offering members an 850-page catalog containing virtually every CD in print. We have the CD's you've been looking for but could never find. We also have the last CD you bought - for a lot less! All CD's are available at wholesale prices. We never send unsolicited CD's and there is never any minimum to order.

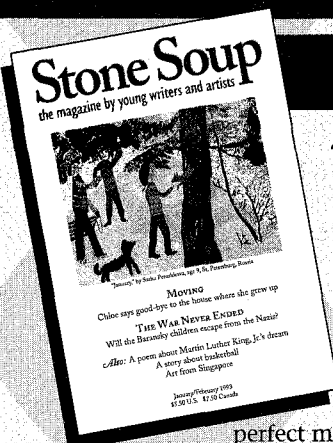
Please call 1-800-Every-CD or visit our web site at www.everycd.com to begin your free trial membership.



NEW! Complete DVD and VHS movie library now available.

©1998 EveryCD

THE LITERARY MAGAZINE BY CHILDREN



"The New Yorker of the 8 to 13 set."

MS. MAGAZINE

"If Stone Soup had been around in the Brontë sisters' early days, they surely would have gotten their start within its pages."

PARENTING MAGAZINE

STONE SOUP, now in its 26th year, is the perfect magazine for 8- to 13-year-olds. Young people love reading the extraordinary stories, poems, and book reviews by their peers published in this handsome magazine. Colorful international children's art is featured in every issue. Budding writers and artists are encouraged to create and submit their own work. **Stone Soup** makes a great holiday gift!

Stone Soup is published six times a year: January, March, May, July, September, November

☐ 1 yr. \$32 ☐ 2 yrs. \$54 ☐ 3 yrs. \$74
Canada and Mexico add \$6/year. Other countries add \$12/year.

☐ Check enclosed ☐ VISA ☐ MC ☐ AmEx

Card # _____

Exp. date _____ Phone _____

Cardholder _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Gift card: ☐ Xmas ☐ Hanukkah ☐ B'day

Gift from _____

P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063 ♦ 1-800-447-4569

Visit our Web site at www.stonesoup.com

molecules. But then Einstein went a step further. He substituted specific experimental values for suspended particles in water (particle diameter of one thousandth of a millimeter, water coefficient of viscosity of .0135, water temperature of 17° Centigrade, and an assumed value of 6×10^{23} for the number of molecules in a standard weight, equivalent to an assumed molecular diameter of one millionth of a millimeter). The result was that the suspended particle should cover a distance of about six thousandths of a millimeter in one minute.

This final prediction was a concrete number, not an equation, and it was readily verifiable with technology then current. This was a "go-no go" prediction. If an experimenter arrived at a number close to this one, the underlying theories of thermodynamics and kinetics would be supported and the hypothesized approximate size of molecules confirmed. If a very different number was found, then Einstein's understanding and theoretical calculations were wrong. He ended his paper with the statement "Let us hope that a researcher will soon succeed in solving the problem presented here, which is so important for the theory of heat."

LIKE the great Danish theorist Niels Bohr, Einstein loved to provoke his imagination with contradictions and paradoxes. He began his first paper on relativity theory with a beautifully simple statement of two paradoxes in the understanding of electromagnetic phenomena. The first was that all experimental results showed that only *relative* motion was measurable. For example, a magnet moving upward through a coil of wire produced exactly the same electrical current as that produced when the coil of wire moved downward around the magnet at the same speed. One could not say from experiment that either the magnet or the coil was at rest while the other moved—only that the two were in motion relative to each other. Yet Maxwell's equations for electromagnetism gave different results depending on whether one considered the magnet at rest or the coil at rest. (As Einstein later showed, the problem was not with Maxwell's equations but with the understanding of time and space used to transform a frame of reference in which the magnet

was at rest into one in which the coil was at rest.) The second paradox was that the wave theory of light seemed to require an ether, yet all experimental attempts to measure motion through the ether had failed.

After summarizing these problems, Einstein postulated that a condition of absolute rest did not exist. The ether was then "superfluous," in his language—it had not been measured because it did not exist. Only relative motion was measurable in physics; hence the origin of "relativity." We have all experienced relativity in mechanics. If you sit on a train that is either at rest or moving at constant speed and look at another passing train without looking at the landscape, you cannot tell which train is moving and which train is at rest; you can only say that each train moves past the other at a certain relative speed.

Einstein then made the additional, seemingly outrageous postulate that the speed of light is always the same, independent of the motion of whatever body emits the light. I will explain why this second postulate seems outrageous, especially following the first. At the turn of the century two mechanical models for motion were known: wave motion and particle motion. In wave motion the speed of the wave is fixed relative to the medium that carries it. Any motion of the medium is then added to or subtracted from the motion of the wave. For example, a canoeist (the wave) who paddles at three miles per hour in still water (the medium) will pass the shore at eight miles per hour when paddling with a current of five miles per hour. In particle motion the traveling particle requires no medium, and its speed is fixed relative to its emitter. Take a pitcher who throws a ball at ninety miles per hour. If before making his throw our pitcher steps onto a conveyor belt that is racing toward the batter at ten miles per hour, the ball will zing across the plate at very nearly a hundred miles per hour.

Now to the extravagant violation of common sense. Einstein's first postulate, eliminating the ether, would seem to require that the propagation of light follow the particle-motion model, in which the speed of a light ray would be fixed relative to its emitter. If the emitter moves, the net speed of light changes. Yet Einstein's second postulate said no. Einstein

More than just a telescope... more than just a microscope

Episcope (the complete vest-pocket optical system) Still only \$59⁹⁵

*But read this ad for an even better deal!

Remove the Episcope from its fitted leather case and it's a 30-power microscope. A twist of the wrist converts it to a 3x telescope, or a unique 3x telescope-loupe. Another twist, and you have a choice of magnifiers and loupes: 5x, 10x, and 15x powers.

The Episcope, only 2" long, was developed in Wetzlar (Germany), the home of world-famous Leica cameras; it's now being made by one of Asia's finest lens makers. The optics are superb: brilliant luminosity, needle-sharp focus, absolute planarity, total chromatic correction, and fully anastigmatic.

The Episcope is the first choice of geologists, biologists, physicians, numismatists, philatelists, engineers, and just anybody who likes to see the infinite detail in his/her surroundings. It comes with a plastic "tripod" for extended observations at 15x or 30x magnifications.

*And here is the "even better deal": Buy two Episcopes for \$119.90 and we'll send you a third one, with our compliments—absolutely FREE!

You may order by toll-free phone, by mail, or by fax and pay by check or Visa/MasterCard. Please give order number #1062E398. Add \$4.95 for ship./ins. and sales tax for CA delivery. You have 30-day refund and one-year warranty. We do not refund postage. For customer service or wholesale information, please call (415) 643-2810.

since 1967
haverhills®

2360 Third St., San Francisco, CA 94107

© Order by toll-free phone: (800) 797-7367 or by fax: (415) 643-2818 ©

The first stereo system to create harmony even before you turn it on.

The Bose® Acoustic Wave® music system surrounds you with sharp, clear stereo sound. Yet the one-piece unit is unobtrusive, simple to use, and small enough to fit almost anywhere in your home. The system includes our patented acoustic waveguide technology, an AM/FM radio, built-in speakers, a compact disc player, and a handy remote control. It's available directly from Bose. So call or return this coupon for more information on the compact stereo system the *Chicago Tribune* calls "the least intimidating quality sound system ever developed." And surround yourself with music, not equipment.

Call today. 1-800-898-BOSE, ext. G4286.

For information on all our products: www.bose.com/g4286

Mr./Mrs./Ms.

Name (Please Print)

Daytime Telephone

Evening Telephone

Address

City

State

Zip

Or mail to: Bose Corporation, Dept. CDD-G4286, The Mountain, Framingham, MA 01701-9168.

BOSE®
Better sound through research®

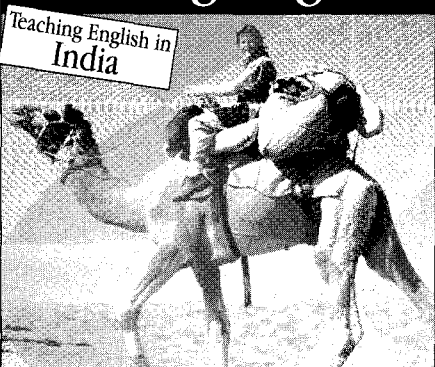
Stylish Comfort



Tilley Endurables
 FREE CATALOGUE 1-800-363-8737 • www.tilley.com

Travel the World Teaching English!

Teaching English in India



Barry Schumaker (Fremont, CA)

"I am enjoying myself here in India. Last week I travelled down to the very southernmost tip of India and witnessed first hand the color of three bodies of water - Indian Ocean, Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea - mixing together under some pretty fantastic sunsets. The beaches were beautiful..."

"Here is a picture of me on a camel. In December we went on a five day camel safari and learned the ins and outs of camel/desert living."

- 4-Week Courses Start Monthly
- No Teaching Experience Required
- You Don't Need A Second Language
- Friendly, Experienced Trainers
- Jobs Available In Many Countries
- Lifetime Placement Assistance

NEW WORLD TEACHERS
 www.goteach.com
 San Francisco • Budapest • Phuket • Puerto Vallarta

Call for a Free Information Pack
800-564-3274

proposed that if our pitcher decides to shine a flashlight at the batter instead of throwing a ball, the light rays will cross the plate at 186,000 miles per second whether the pitcher shines from the mound or from a conveyor belt moving toward the batter. In short, Einstein had conjectured that something very peculiar happens at high speeds.

Speeds involve distance and time. If relative speeds approaching the velocity of light do not add and subtract according to common sense, then intervals of distance and time do not either. The young Einstein's esoteric postulates were in effect questioning common notions of time and space. Einstein was well aware of the philosophical import of his ideas, because as a student he had read Kant, Hegel, and other philosophers. Kant argued that certain fundamental concepts, such as the nature of time and space, had to be fixed in the human mind prior to experience as necessary conditions for human beings to perceive the external world. Einstein, however, regarded all concepts as subject to revision based on experiment. There were no sacred cows—everything was open to question. A few pages into his paper he began questioning the meaning of time with the profound innocence of a child.

If we want to describe the *motion* of a particle, we give the values of its coordinates [position] as functions of time. However, we must keep in mind that a mathematical description of this kind only has physical meaning if we are already clear as to what we understand here by "time." We have to bear in mind that all our judgments involving time are always judgments about *simultaneous events*. If, for example, I say that "the train arrives here at 7 o'clock," that means, more or less, "the pointing of the small hand of my watch to 7 and the arrival of the train are simultaneous events." It might seem that all difficulties involved in the definition of "time" could be overcome by my substituting "position of the small hand of my watch" for "time." Such a definition is indeed sufficient if a time is to be defined exclusively for the place at which the watch is located; but the definition is no longer satisfactory when series of events occurring at different locations have to be linked temporally.

Sentences like these hide ideas of staggering significance. Part of Einstein's great genius was to dig deep into our unconscious assumptions about such primal concepts as time and space and to raise these concepts to the level of consciousness. Once there, these concepts could be articulated, questioned, and probed.

After the above passage Einstein went on to propose a working definition of time for events in different locations (essentially, a method for synchronizing clocks). Then he derived what his two postulates required for the temporal and spatial measurements of observers in motion relative to each other. The result, which has been long since confirmed in quantitative detail, is that time is not absolute. A second for me is not necessarily a second for you. The duration between two events depends on the motion of the observer relative to the events. For example, the elapse of one second by a watch you are wearing will take about 1.1547 seconds by my watch if I am rushing toward you at half the speed of light. These discrepancies become tiny at the low speeds of everyday life, and Einstein realized that all of our (faulty) intuition about time is based on such everyday speeds. Einstein was a physicist, not a mathematician, and he was keenly aware of the importance of experiments in the assessment of theories. Yet he also appreciated the limitations of experiments and of human sensory perception. One sees this fine balance throughout his work.

EINSTEIN'S caution about interpreting experience is seen again in his paper on quantum physics. He began by pointing out physicists' views of the "profound formal difference" between matter and energy—the former granular, composed of a finite number of indivisible atoms, and the latter continuous and infinitely divisible. Indeed, Einstein wrote, Maxwell's wave theory, in which light is considered continuous, "has proved itself superbly in describing purely optical phenomena." But then he wrote, "One should keep in mind, however, that optical observations refer to time averages rather than instantaneous values." Here he was hinting that if light were composed of large numbers of tiny units, like atoms, most experiments would not detect that fact. Analogously, a meteorologist who measures daily rainfall by the rise of water in

THE ATLANTIC
MONTHLY
offers you

FREE information

FROM OUR ADVERTISERS

JUST CIRCLE YOUR SELECTIONS ON THE ATTACHED POSTAGE-PAID CARD AND MAIL IT TODAY.

TRAVEL EUROPE



Check 901 to receive all information on Travel Europe.

1. **AIR MAURITIUS.** Fascinating, memorable, and very affordable tours to Mauritius, Madagascar, The Seychelles, and the other exotic islands of the Indian Ocean. Colorful folder. FREE.

2. **SCOTLAND.** Visit historic Scotland—breathtakingly beautiful lochs, castles, kilts, and friendly people are waiting to welcome you. And it's less than an hour from exciting London! Call 800-248-4454 for your free 104-page vacation planner.

3. **VACANCES EN CAMPAGNE.** Rental properties in the most desirable parts of France, from restored stone farmhouses to elegant chateaux. Specializing in Provence.



FINANCIAL SERVICES

Check 902 to receive all information on Financial Services.

4. **MORGAN STANLEY DEAN WITTER INTERCAPITAL.** For more information on Morgan Stanley Dean Witter InterCapital mutual funds call 800-THE-DEAN.

5. **DREYFUS FINANCIAL SERVICES.** For more information on how Dreyfus equity funds can work for you in today's market environment, call Dreyfus at 800-472-1993 or call your financial adviser or visit our Web site at www.dreyfus.com.

6. **MASTERCARD INTERNATIONAL.** World Mastercard. No preset spending limit, exceptional travel rewards, personal concierge, and more. For more information on these unique benefits and how to apply, visit our Web site at www.mastercard.com or call toll-free 877-894-7831.

7. **TIAA-CREF.** Financial services exclusively for people in education and research. Send for your free personal-investing kit.

8. **T. ROWE PRICE IRA.** Roll over your IRA. 800-401-5348. www.troweprice.com.

9. **T. ROWE PRICE VALUE FUND.** 800-541-6592. www.troweprice.com.



AUTOMOBILES

Check 903 to receive all information on Automobiles.

10. **LINCOLN NAVIGATOR.** It's the most luxurious way to travel... anywhere. To learn more, call 800-446-8888 or visit www.lincolnvehicles.com.

11. **SUBARU.** Subaru Outback. The world's first sport-utility wagon. For more information, please call 800-WANT-AWD or visit www.subaru.com.

12. **TOYOTA AND THE ENVIRONMENT.** Find out about Toyota's environmental breakthroughs, such as electric vehicles, fuel cells, and hybrid technology.



TRAVEL

Check 904 to receive all information on Travel.

13. **CANADIAN TOURISM COMMISSION.** There's a place in your soul where happiness lives. To find it come to Canada.

14. **ISRAEL MINISTRY OF TOURISM.** This unique country has it all. History, culture, great food, shopping, beaches, and more. No One Belongs Here More Than You.

15. **SWAIN AUSTRALIA TOURS.** For customized travel to Australia with twelve years' experience contact Swain Australia Tours at 800-227-9246.

TRAVEL CARIBBEAN

Check 905 to receive all information on Travel Caribbean.

16. **GRAND LIDO RESORTS.** Luxurious accommodations, gourmet dining, 24-hour room service, premium liquors, unlimited water sports, tennis, golf—everything's included. No tipping. Free weddings.

17. **WINDJAMMER BAREFOOT CRUISES** will take you on a vacation you will never forget! Ride trade winds to unspoiled tropical hideaways, aboard our tall ships. Experience the Caribbean the way it was meant to be.



FOOD & BEVERAGES

Check 906 to receive all information on Food & Beverages.

18. **GEVALIA KAFFE.** Fine coffees of Europe—more than 22 distinctive roasts, Select Varietal®, and flavored coffees. For express home delivery anywhere in the U.S. call 800-GEVALIA (800-438-2542).

19. **HIGHLAND PARK SINGLE MALT SCOTCH WHISKY.** Highland Park Single Malt Scotch whisky from the Orkney Islands, the greatest all-rounder in the world of malt whisky.

THIS & THAT

Check 907 to receive all information on This & That.

20. **ALLEN-EDMONDS.** Premium men's footwear in corporate and casual styles. Sizes 5-18, widths AAAA

to EEE. Recrafting program. Call 800-235-2348. www.allenedmonds.com.

21. **AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS.** Free brochure on retaining your right of patient choice and important information on surgical care. www.facs.org.

22. **EDWARD R. HAMILTON, BOOKSELLER.** America's biggest bargain-book selection. Save 30%-80% on current books and recent overstocks. Free catalogue.

23. **TOUGH TRAVELER®.** Kids' and adults' hiking gear and travel gear; child carriers, luggage, computer bags, backpacks. USA top-rated.

24. **SORICÉ AUDIO/VIDEO STORAGE SYSTEMS.** Free catalogue. Solid oak, cherry, or walnut cabinets and racks for CDs, DVDs, videos, LPs, laser discs, stereo components.

25. **WILLIS AND GEIGER.** The Willis and Geiger catalogue—clothing from the principal outfitter to the world's most serious adventurers. Since 1902. 800-991-9066.

TRAVEL U.S.

Check 908 to receive all information on Travel U.S.

26. **ALASKA-DENALI NATIONAL PARK.** Camp Denali and North Face Lodge—uncommon destinations within view of majestic Mount McKinley. Active-learning vacations, natural history, wildlife, and guided hiking since 1952.

27. **COLORADO TRAVEL & TOURISM.** Colorado. For a free Colorado Official State Vacation Guide call 800-COLORADO.

28. **WYOMING. LIKE NO PLACE ON EARTH.** For a free vacation guide call 800-225-5996, ext. 828, or write Wyoming Division of Tourism, Cheyenne, WY 82002.

Poets & Writers

POETS & WRITERS MAGAZINE
WHAT CREATIVE WRITERS NEED TO KNOW

Subscribe to
*Poets &
Writers
Magazine*,
and six
times a
year you'll
receive news

of publishing opportunities
and upcoming grants and
awards, interviews with poets
and fiction writers, essays on
the creative process, and
classifieds that list everything
from jobs to house rentals.

TO ORDER please send check or
money order for \$19.95 to the address
below, or e-mail subs@pw.org.

72 SPRING STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10012

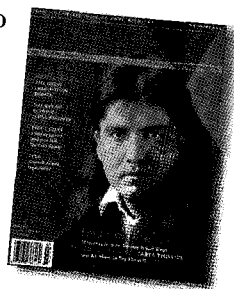
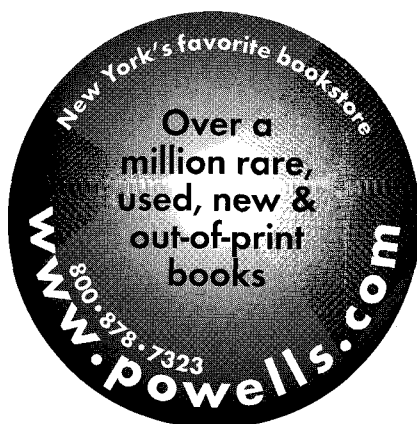


PHOTO: MARION ETTLINGER FOR OUTLINE

SAM199



Monks' Blend

☙ COFFEE ☙

Blended and Roasted to Monastic Perfection

tel. 805.962.9855 - fax 805.962.4957
www.mount-calvary.org

www.drymartini.com

a cup would not know that rain arrives in individual drops.

In the rhetoric of this first section of the quantum paper Einstein revealed his strong preference for unity. He would have liked a world in which everything was composed of "atoms" or else everything was continuous, just as he preferred that a condition of absolute rest not exist for electromagnetics if it did not exist for mechanics. At the age of twenty-six he was already guided by his philosophical leanings as well as by his keen intuition.

Next Einstein used an unexpected thermodynamic calculation to show that the detailed appearance of black-body radiation was exactly what one would expect if light consisted of a gas of "atoms," or quanta, each with an energy proportional to the frequency of light. Here and elsewhere in these papers I was extremely impressed by Einstein's mastery of thermodynamics and kinetic theory, at a level well beyond the training received by graduate students in physics today. With Einstein's proposal of light quanta, the energy of light spreading out from a light bulb is "not distributed continuously over ever-increasing volumes of space, but consists of a finite number of energy quanta localized at points of space that move without dividing, and can be absorbed or generated only as complete units." Einstein further showed that his quantum theory of light could explain details of the recently observed photoelectric effect, in which electrical currents were created in metals by irradiating them with ultraviolet light. It was for this explanation that he received the Nobel Prize sixteen years later. Physicists today believe that everything is quantum.

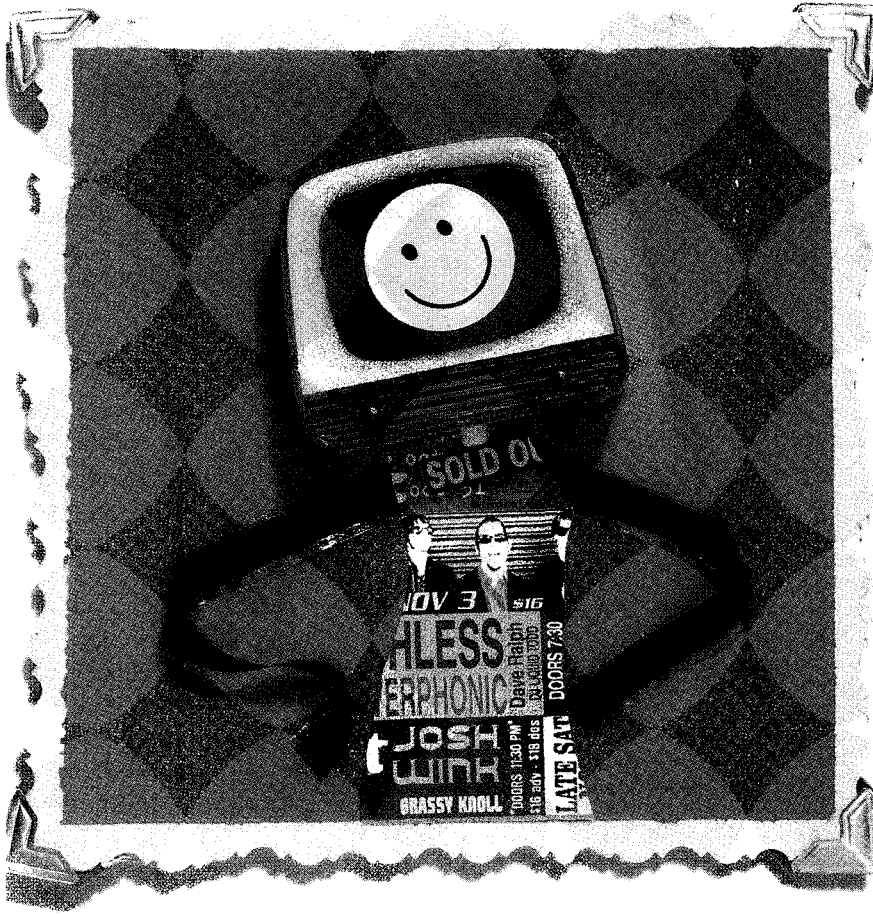
In a letter to his friend Conrad Habicht, in late May of 1905, Einstein wrote that his granular theory of light was "very revolutionary." In fact, he did not consider his quantum proposal to be on solid ground, derived from first principles. His hesitation is revealed in the title of the paper: "On a Heuristic Point of View Concerning the Production and Transformation of Light." Even after a full theory of quantum physics was developed by Werner Heisenberg and Erwin Schrödinger in the 1920s, Einstein never completely accepted the theory and its probabilistic view of reality.

ALTHOUGH the many radical ideas in his 1905 papers were only slowly accepted, Einstein soon began to receive appreciative letters from such leading scientific figures as the experimentalist Philipp Lenard and the theorist Max Planck, each the most distinguished in his field in the German-speaking world. Some of these letters were addressed to "Esteemed Colleague," even though Einstein had barely completed his doctoral dissertation, and their senders were soon startled to discover that "A. Einstein" was a twenty-six-year-old patent-office clerk. By May of 1909 Einstein had been appointed "extraordinary professor of theoretical physics" at Zurich University, and two months later he received the first of his many honorary degrees, from the University of Geneva.

Einstein never had another year in which he showed the same ferocity of intellectual upheaval. Most theoretical physicists do their best work early, by the age of thirty-five, and perhaps Einstein needed a young person's agility of mind for the efforts of 1905. Perhaps the cataclysm of thought in the Swiss patent office was facilitated by his isolation from the academic establishment and his general sense of alienation from the world. Or perhaps, until his great work on gravity a decade later, he felt that he had exhausted most of the accessible topics of fundamental importance. In another letter to his friend Habicht, in September of 1905, Einstein wrote, "There is not always a ripe theme for musing over. At least not one that excites me."

At the age of sixty-seven, long after he had become perhaps the most celebrated scientist of all time, Einstein reflected back on these early years and his motivations to pursue science.

Even when I was a fairly precocious young man, the nothingness of the hopes and strivings which chases most men restlessly through life came to my consciousness with considerable vitality. . . . Out yonder there was this huge world, which exists independently of us human beings and which stands before us like a great, eternal riddle. . . . The contemplation of this world beckoned like a liberation, and I soon noticed that many a man whom I had learned to esteem and to admire had found inner freedom and security in devoted occupation with it. ☙



Lost in Post-Reality

*The national entertainment state
threatens to transmogrify American life
into a soap opera*

by Nicholas Lemann

LIFE THE MOVIE: How Entertainment Conquered Reality

by Neal Gabler.
Knopf, 303 pages, \$25.00.

NEAL Gabler, the author of two outstanding books based on original research, one on early Hollywood and the other on Walter Winchell, has turned his hand to a genre that is logistically easier to bring off but intellectually more difficult: the book-length argument. A history or a biogra-

phy has a natural way of organizing itself (that is, chronologically), and its analytic passages don't have to drive the book, because narrative does. Argument is a bonus, a pleasant surprise. In a book constructed so as to make a point, obviously the point is going to have to be able to withstand intense scrutiny.

Gabler's argument here is an interesting, even an arresting one. He says that entertainment, the subject of his previous two books (and of his next one, a biography of Walt Disney), has become increasingly important, and not just because it is a big industry and a

leading exporter; its logic and rhythm have become the controlling ones in American life. "Karl Marx and Joseph Schumpeter both seem to have been wrong," Gabler writes. "It is not any ism but entertainment that is arguably the most pervasive, powerful and ineluctable force of our time—a force so overwhelming that it has finally metastasized into life."

The basic means by which we now organize experience, Gabler says, is the creation of "life movies," or (a great neologism) "lifies," about public figures and about ourselves. These have a structure borrowed from popular entertainment, movies in particular. There has to be a strong central character, a plot line, and a play on the emotions. We are far more absorbed by lifies than by the facts of any situation.

Gabler rolls out dozens of examples of the transmogrification of life into stock drama, as entertainment techniques have relentlessly leached into non-entertainment venues. In politics the quadrennial political conventions have changed from real dramas to pageants staged for the purpose of winning the votes of television viewers. Ronald Reagan turned the presidency itself into a procession of scripts and images. The docudrama and the novelistic lead are ubiquitous in journalism. The self-dramatizing memoir has taken over book publishing. Donald Trump became a tycoon by making himself a celebrity first. Ordinary people have turned from religion to the worship of celebrities (Gabler points out that the Air Jordan logo resembles a crucifix), and have also become the dramaturges of their own lives with the aid of home video cameras, Internet chat rooms, and health clubs joined in the hope of getting to look like a star. Busted farmers stock their land with exotic animals and go into "agritainment." Even the Pope, Gabler implies, is stealing his moves from James Brown.

It's mesmerizing to have the surreal dramas that make up so much of the on-rushing stream of American life—the Washington feeding frenzies and the Diana-keenings and the star-chamber trash-TV interview shows—presented all together. The nearly unavoidable first reaction is that Gabler is on to a real change, up there in significance with ur-

You deserve a factual look at...

Much Pressure on Israel

Will Netanyahu be able to preserve his country's security?

Unrelenting pressure is being applied on Prime Minister Netanyahu to make ever-more-dangerous concessions to the Palestinians. The recent Wye Plantation Conference was only a foretaste of what is going to be demanded from Israel in the so-called "final status negotiations." What follows are some areas in which demands will be made and pressure will be applied.

What are the facts?

Land for Peace. The whole concept is absurd. Never in the history of the world has any nation returned lands to those who have attacked it. Even so, in line with the Camp David accord, Israel has yielded the vast Sinai to Egypt. It has yielded Gaza and about 40% of the "West Bank" to the Palestinians. Over 90% of the Arab population of the territories is under the control of the Palestinian Authority. What else is expected of a country that occupies only a fraction of 1% of the lands occupied by the Arabs? And shouldn't land for peace work both ways? Shouldn't the Arabs give up some land to get peace? Or why not just simply "peace for peace?"

A Palestinian State. Israel could not survive if Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank")

were in unfriendly hands. There can be little question of the enduring hostility of the Arabs. The "West Bank" mountain ridges dominate the narrow waist of Israel, in which over 70% of the Jewish population, 80% of its industrial base, and the most important military installations are located. The Palestinians would not need an army to make life in Israel impossible. Moveable Katyusha rockets would dominate the area. Israel needs to keep strategic control of the "West Bank," without which it would not be defensible.

Return of the "Refugees." Population transfers have occurred throughout history. In 1945, the resettlement of 3 million Germans from Poland and Czechoslovakia was arranged. Following the collapse of its North African empire, France accepted

close to 1.5 million people. More than 12 million(!) Muslims and Hindus were exchanged between India and Pakistan. Israel has recognized this historical necessity. But the "Arab Nation", with its enormous wealth and vast under-populated lands, has stubbornly refused to face facts. Instead of allowing the Palestinians who left Israel in 1948 (and their descendants) to be integrated into their societies, they have, for the past fifty years, kept them in miserable "refugee camps" and have encouraged them to plot vengeance and terrorism. Return of these people to Israel,

"By not yielding to pressure and by not allowing Israel to be strategically weakened, Mr. Netanyahu will bring peace with security, *shalom batuach*, to Israel and to the entire Middle East."

including the "West Bank" is impossible. Neither Israel nor any Palestinian entity could absorb them. There is not enough land and not enough water. It would be as unthinkable as for those 3 million Germans to return to Poland and the Czech republic or,

for that matter, for the 800,000 Jews who fled or were expelled from the Arab countries to return to their original homes.

Jerusalem. Before the end of the 1967 Six-Day War, no claims to Jerusalem being a Moslem holy city or the capital of any Arab country were asserted. But for over two thousand years, Jews have been living in Jerusalem and they have been the majority population since the 19th century. Why should they give up their capital, their holy city as far back as memory goes—or even any part of it? The Moslems have their holy cities, Mecca and Medina, and they have 22 Arab capitals. There are important Arab cities in the "West Bank," under full control of the Palestinian Authority. But Jerusalem is the eternal and indivisible capital of the Jewish State.

These are the most important issues that Netanyahu and his government will have to confront in the final status talks. As to Jewish "settlements" in the "West Bank": Jews have the right to live in any part of the land of Israel. And why not? How could 160,000 Jews living among 1 million Arabs in the "West Bank" be an obstacle to peace if over 1 million Arabs live within the "green line" of Israel? Nobody considers them an obstacle to peace. By not yielding to pressure from any source, and by not allowing Israel to be strategically weakened, Mr. Netanyahu will be true to his campaign promise and will bring peace with security, *shalom batuach*, to Israel and to the entire Middle East.

This ad has been published and paid for by

FLAME

Facts and Logic about the Middle East
P.O. Box 590359 ■ San Francisco, CA

FLAME is a 501(c)(3) educational institution. Your tax-deductible contribution allows us to publish these important messages.

banization or post-industrialism. Reality is fading away as the governing principle in human affairs. The manipulation of perceptions is replacing it.

If only Gabler were content to be merely a purveyor of what he calls "simply articulated, controversial ideas" (a category that has taken over our discourse, as another aspect of the tenor of the times), there matters would rest—at least within the covers of *Life the Movie*. Instead he tries to limn what he calls the "Entertainment Revolution" with some precision, and in so doing he winds up presenting both a compelling idea and historical evidence that sows a bit of doubt around it.

ARTIFICE and illusion have always played a part in the workings of our society. Nineteenth-century America was awash in dime novels, traveling carnivals, and other forms of popular culture that use crude dramatic conventions. In religion the dominant strain, evangelical Protestantism, was, Gabler says, "highly personal rather than hierarchical, vernacular, expressive and enthusiastic." Beginning with Andrew Jackson, presidential candidates have regularly run on images and slogans created by publicists. Pop-culture celebrity has been around a long time too: Buffalo Bill spent much more of his life as a traveling entertainer than as a real frontier Indian fighter. Even the much revered tradition of "hard news" reporting has its roots, Gabler reminds us, in newspaper publishers' search for "the best way to sell their papers in an entertainment environment"—news was more dramatic than editorial opinion, which had previously dominated American newspapers. Gabler gives us several examples of long-ago, long-forgotten sensational murder trials that transfixed the press, up to and including *The New York Times*, every bit as completely as the O. J. Simpson case did.

Mass psychology, public opinion, and propaganda have generated concern among intellectuals throughout the twentieth century. In America writers have been bemoaning the artificiality of life for many years—at least since the publication of David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*, fifty years ago. Much of Gabler's argument, as he graciously admits, was prefigured in Daniel Boorstin's *The Im-*

age (1961). In fiction the idea that people try to turn their lives into popular drama goes back even further: think of Madame Bovary, inflamed and driven to ruin by reading romance novels; or the various Mark Twain characters (led by Tom Sawyer) who attempt to leap into the pages of a cheap melodrama; or Nathanael West's addled migrants to Hollywood; or Jay Gatsby and Willy Loman, pathetically trying to build personas that conform to bromides about success. Relatively new academic fields such as semiotics, culture studies, and media studies have gone at the traffic in perceptions with newly intense attention and newly precise analytic tools, but the underlying process has been around for a long, long time. It isn't too much to say that narrative and visual imagery are the basic means by which people process experience.

So what's new, exactly? Gabler says that two developments separate us from the relatively inconsequential manipulation of perceptions in the past. The first of these was the development of the movies, a form of entertainment exponentially more powerful, popular, and illusionary than anything that had gone before. (Gabler treats television as essentially an extension of movies.) The second development, which took place gradually as movies and movie logic worked their way into every corner of the society, was "the triumph of entertainment over life itself."

It may be that this has happened. It feels true, and there's no way to prove or disprove it as a matter of fact. Gabler's evidence, however, could be marshaled in support of the idea that we're seeing a development less earth-shattering than the trumping of reality by perception in the conduct of human affairs. That development would be an expansion in the breadth and visibility of popular culture.

The opposition of perception (or entertainment) and reality is quite similar to a much older chestnut: the opposition of elite culture and popular culture. Gabler lays out a pretty harsh version of popular culture's imperatives. The basic device of popular culture is pure sensation; that of elite culture is analysis. Popular culture is predictable and formulaic, aiming to push the same buttons over and over again; elite culture aims to "make it new." Popular

culture imposes narrative structure on life (it must have characters and a plot); elite culture imposes conceptual structure (there must be categories). Popular culture stresses personality; elite culture stresses character. Popular culture addresses our deepest-seated fears and longings obliquely or metaphorically (think of the relation of a roller-coaster ride to death, or of a movie kiss to love); elite culture attempts to meet them head on and think them through. If we compare the way television discusses the process of government with the way policy analysts or professors discuss it, we see the laws of popular culture at work: because television has to attract a mass audience, it has to communicate the workings of government by creating Gabler's "lifies," with celebrities and plot twists. At the moment, television expects Washington politicians "to star in an elaborate film noir of corruption and/or sex," as Gabler aptly puts it. And so they do.

POPULAR culture has always posed a quandary for intellectuals. The intellectual world is generally aligned with the left, which is to say that it likes to be on the side of the common man; but intellectuals are engaged in producing elite culture, not popular culture. Probably the main tradition in American intellectual life is therefore one of liberal elitism, with, in cultural matters, the emphasis on the elitism. That tradition may now be ending: the generation of intellectuals that was raised on television is much more likely to admire popular culture than were its forebears, the Macdonalds and Rahvs and McCarthys. But Gabler seems to want not to take the side of either elite or popular culture. He doesn't want to be the modern-day Walter Lippmann or José Ortega y Gasset, issuing warnings against the rule of the crowd, and he doesn't want to be a Mickey Mouse-worshipping Jean Baudrillard. Part of the attractiveness to him of the idea of post-reality might be that it offers a way of eliding the issue.

The tone in which he discusses popular culture gives him away, though. When Gabler is writing about members of the celebrity culture, from William Randolph Hearst to Ronald Reagan to Madonna to Tina Brown, his voice is unmistakably disapproving. He says that

Sensual Products People Love



*The Xandria Catalogue for ordering
without embarrassment or disappointment.*

Today, you know that fully exploring your sexuality is as healthy as it is fun. Look over the new Xandria Gold Collection catalogue and discover a wide array of sexual products for giving and receiving even greater pleasure.

Trust our experience. Men and women have delighted in the Xandria Collection for more than 20 years. We select only the finest products from around the world—products consistent with the philosophy of our board of professionals in human sexuality.

Rely on our 100%, three-way Guarantee.

If you've been reluctant to purchase sexual products through the mail, consider this:

1. We guarantee your privacy. Everything we ship is plainly and securely wrapped with no clue to its contents. All transactions are strictly confidential, and we *never* sell, rent, or trade customers' names.

2. We guarantee your satisfaction. If a product is unsatisfactory, simply return it for replacement or refund within 60 days.

3. We guarantee that the product you choose will keep giving you pleasure. Should it malfunction, just return it to us for a replacement.

Order today and see. Send for your catalogue now. We'll apply its \$4.00 price to your first order. You have nothing to lose and an entirely new world of enjoyment to gain.

**The Xandria Collection, Dept. AT0199
P.O. Box 31039, San Francisco, CA 94131-9988**

Please send me, by first class mail, the **Xandria Gold Edition Catalogue**. Enclosed is a check or money order for \$4.00, applied to my first purchase. (\$5 Canada, £3 UK)

I am an adult over 21 years of age.

Signature required _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Zip _____

Xandria, 165 Valley Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005-1340. Void where prohibited by law.

CD STORAGE+™



No. B300 (Shown in Solid Oak)

SORICE SYSTEMS Include... Video, DVD, Tape, LP, Laserdisc and Component Storage Units.

- ❖ Our B300 Model shown stores 300 CDs.
- ❖ Impeccably crafted in these Premium Solid Hardwoods: Oak, Walnut, or Cherry.
- ❖ Adjustable Shelves store any combination of CDs, Videos & Cassettes – all in One cabinet.
- ❖ Adjustable Solid Brass Bookends keep Discs & Tapes upright and in place.
- ❖ Cabinets can be stacked, wall mounted or left free standing.
- ❖ Optional Wood or Glass Doors are available.
- ❖ Enclosed back provides dust protection.
- ❖ Compact size: 39 1/2" H x 22 1/2" W x 7 1/2" D. Cabinet comes assembled.



PO Box 747-33, Nutley, NJ 07110
e-mail: soriceav@aol.com
http://www.sorice.com

For FREE Color Literature & Prices
on our Full Line of Quality Products
Call: 1-800-432-8005
Fax: 1-973-667-8688

ANSWERS TO THE DECEMBER PUZZLER

S	C	A	N	D	A	L	S	L	O	P	P	Y
P	O	R	T	A	L	S	H	A	G	O	R	A
A	N	C	E	S	T	O	R	C	O	L	A	S
N	G	H	S	H	E	F	I	E	F	E	N	P
D	A	N	C	E	R	E	V	B	R	A	C	E
E	S	C	A	R	O	L	E	V	I	X	E	N
X	H	O	R	U	S	T	L	E	D	E	R	P
C	U	P	I	D	C	O	M	M	A	N	D	O
O	M	A	N	I	O	U	B	A	Y	L	O	R
M	I	L	G	L	U	T	U	G	S	G	N	T
E	D	I	F	Y	T	R	I	P	L	A	N	E
T	O	N	E	R	E	B	L	I	T	Z	E	N
B	R	E	W	E	D	S	T	E	W	A	R	D

"Criss-Crossing"

Clues. 1. ARCH (double def.); SCAN + DAL (lad rev.) 2. S(L)OPPY; L + ACE 3. P(O)R + T(A)LS; (h)ALTER 4. A + S + PEN; AG + OR + A 5. CON + GAS; A + N(C)ESTOR 6. COL + AS; P(O)LEAXE (expel a anag.) 7. FI + EF (rev.); SHRIVE + L (dervish - d anag.) 8. B + RACE; FR(ID)AYS 9. SPAN + DEX (rev.); ESCA + ROLE (case anag.) 10. RUSTLED (double def.); F(EL) + TOUT 11. MAGPIE (anag.); C(OMM)AN-DO (mom anag.) 12. OMANI (hidden); S + CARING 13. BAY + L + OR; PORT + END 14. SCOUTED (anag.); G(L)UT 15. OP(AL)INE; EDIFY (hidden) 16. BU(I + L)T; TRIP + LANE 17. HUM(ID)OR; T(O)NER (rent rev.) 18. LYRE (homophone); B + REWED 19. STEW + A + RD (Dr. rev.); GAZ(e) + A

Vanity Fair magazine, for example, exhibits an "almost deranged obsession with fame, wealth, beauty, status, aesthetics, and heat." Occasionally he slips into sneering sarcasm, as when he's discussing the "accomplishment" of Barbara Walters, the "achievement" of Zsa Zsa Gabor, or Elizabeth Taylor's status as a "theorist." Nostalgia of a kind against which his historical passages rigorously work creeps in when Gabler's subject is contemporary popular culture. He presents institutions that were created to be popular entertainment, such as newspaper journalism, trade-book publishing, and major-league baseball, as having recently been corrupted by entertainment values. It's impossible not to see which side Gabler is on when he asserts that "entertainment is the primary standard of value for virtually everything in modern society. . . . to be a celebrity is widely regarded as the most exalted state of human existence," and that we live under the threat of becoming "a faux society of authors without books, artists without art, musicians without music, politicians without policies, scholars without scholarship."

This kind of talk would seem to require Gabler to insist that elite control should be re-established over culture and society. Since he doesn't want to do that, he ends by claiming to have no position on the issue of "entertainment as the engine of our lives," or even on whether the new state of post-reality that he has spent the book describing is "morally, aesthetically and epistemologically preferable" to old-fashioned reality. This leaves unanswered what to my mind are the essential questions raised by Gabler's inquiry. Exactly how controlling is post-reality in American life today? And if post-reality is in fact an alarmingly powerful force, what do we do to rein it in?

My guess at the answer to the first of these questions would be that Gabler exaggerates the power of post-reality in private life but has a good point in the realm of public affairs. His idea about private life is that people can make some kind of entertainment-induced dramatic version of themselves come true—that it's possible to be a Dorothy who never has to wake up back on the farm in Kansas. His idea about public life is that dramatic imperatives now, newly, control the action. I find the first of these propo-

sitions implausible and the second intriguing. Monica Lewinsky apparently believed that she and President Clinton could fall in love and marry; isn't that an example of a "lifie" that didn't come true precisely because it was so unrealistic? But the public drama of the affair and its discovery did become the driving force in American politics for quite a while. A private life based on fantasy nearly always winds up foundering on the shoals of reality. A public issue with a compelling story line, though, quite often pushes issues of objectively greater importance off the stage.

As for the second question, what to do about the spread of post-reality, the standard answer has been to devise mechanisms to buffer governance from popular whim. But both questions are big, daunting ones. To establish the precise extent to which reality has lost control of public life and drama has gained it, and to figure out a way to undo the change if it has been for the worse, would be an enormous job. That Gabler hasn't done it here doesn't mean that *Life the Movie* suffers from a crippling flaw. At modest length, it frames a discussion that seems absolutely vital right now. ☼

BRIEF REVIEWS



The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí

by Ian Gibson.
Norton, 798 pages, \$45.00.

According to his biographer, "Salvador Dalí is not a trustworthy source of information about himself." Dalí could be an amusing source of misinformation, however, and in one respect he seems to have been accurate. He once announced, "The only difference between Dalí and a madman is that DALÍ IS NOT MAD." Mr. Gibson's deeply researched, very well written biography demonstrates that Dalí had the narrowly focused self-absorption of certain maniacs, but knew how to use it to his advantage—which maniacs rarely do. Mr. Gibson believes that Dalí, who grew from an exceptionally timid child into a sexually incompetent adult, was ruled all his life by shame—although by normal standards the juvenile examples of it that survive hardly amount to more than embarrassment. Whatever drove him, the teenaged Dalí wrote out a general plan for success as a painter and followed it, with whatever details of action seemed necessary, to the end. The plan did not include gratitude, loyalty, or financial honesty, but

gave plenty of room for experiment, theatricalism, publicity, and adventures that were sometimes even funnier than Dalí intended—and he was a great comedian. He was also, of course, a greatly influential Surrealist painter, and Mr. Gibson gives thorough, intelligent attention to Dalí's work. It is hard to imagine a more satisfactory life of this very complicated artist.

Sarajevo Blues

by Semezdin Mehmedinović,
translated by Ammiel Alcalay.
City Lights, 122 pages,
\$12.95.

Mr. Mehmedinović left his native Bosnia in 1996, but his record of the horrifying events he observed there is vividly immediate. In short pieces of prose and poetry the author recaptures the stoicism created by constant danger and the incongruous survival of pre-war habits. A woman, a Chetnik gunner, sunbathes semi-nude between shots. Cigarettes still come wrapped, but in any paper that is handy, which "might be toilet paper or even pages from a book so that in the leisure time tobacco affords you can read fragments of a poem or the

Valentine's Day
1-800-433-2988



Geese Mate For Life Symbol of Eternal Love

Eternal love is beautifully symbolized in our Geese Mate for Life pin. Finely crafted in 14K yellow gold, two geese are majestically depicted together in flight. As a gesture of your love, or the special bond between two people, it makes the perfect gift.

Comes beautifully gift wrapped with the sentiments expressed by this piece on a small card tucked inside the box. Shown actual size.

Pin with ruby eyes \$345.00
Necklace w/ruby eyes, 18" chain ..\$445.00
for diamond eyes add \$100.00

Absolute Satisfaction Guaranteed

1-800-433-2988

Call M-F 9am-4:30pm Shipping is free

Cross Jewelers

Jewelers to New England Since 1908

570 A Congress St., Portland, ME

©92

PUBLISH YOUR BOOK!

Our FREE step-by-step guide to Self Publishing gives you all features and prices up-front. You're ensured quality with in-house printing and bindery services. We offer low minimum quantities - only 200 books! Call or write for our FREE guide.

MP
MORRIS PUBLISHING

3212 E. Hwy 30
Kearney, NE 68847

800-650-7888, ext. ATM1
<http://morrispublishing.com>

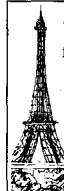
Earn Your College Degrees From The Leader in Distance Learning

Associate • Bachelor • Master • Doctor
Business Administration • Education
Psychology • Law • Mgmt of Technology
Southern California University
for Professional Studies
1840 E 17th St AM Santa Ana, CA 92705
800/477-2254 www.scups.edu

Our
20th
Year

The Newsletter
for People Who
Love Paris

To order call toll free:
1-800-677-9660
www.parisnotes.com



PARIS
notes

publishing since 1992
current events, culture
history, restaurants
hotels, travel tips
\$39 10x/yr

THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY
CLASSIFIED
JANUARY • 1999

BOOKS/PUBLICATIONS

MANUSCRIPTS WANTED, ALL TYPES. Publisher with 75-year tradition. "Author's Guide To Subsidy Publishing." (800) 695-9599.

BOOK LOVER'S ULTIMATE QUESTION—"What do I read next?" Backlist, a monthly, six-page newsletter, has the answers. We explore older and unique works of fiction and nonfiction to illuminate what books and authors are worth considering for your reading list! \$39.95/year. Call: (800) 662-4834 or visit: www.backlistreader.com.

NEW BOOKS—Fiction and non-fiction. Look up: www.lionheartpress.com.

NON-FICTION BOOK CLUB offers members current thought-provoking books. For free club booklist write to: The Thoughtful Reader's Book Society, P.O. Box 5856, Eugene, OR 97405.

DO YOU HAVE A BOOK TO PUBLISH? Established publisher can help. Contact Pentland Press, Dept. AM. (800) 948-2786.

RETIREMENT CHOICES. Respected consultant shares important advice required in selecting an Independent or Assisted Living Retirement Center. Become confident in this confusing process. Send check for \$26 + \$4 S&H to Retirement Living Advisors, 9594 First NE #412, Seattle, WA 98115. Money-back guarantee.

COLLECTION/HOBBIES

NEWSPAPERS: Rare, historic. 1600s through the 1960s. Extensive catalogue \$2.00. Hughes, Box 3636, Williamsport, PA 17701. www.rarenewspapers.com.

EDUCATION/INSTRUCTION

MONTICELLO UNIVERSITY. The Practitioner's MBA & JD Programs. Accredited Doctor, Master, Bachelor. www.monticello.edu. Fax: (913) 661-9414. Telephone: (800) 405-7935.

DOCTORAL/MASTER'S DEGREES. Accredited, 1 to 2 years; 1 month residency. Business, education, government, int. relations, psych., religion, social work, health services. Write: Berne University, International Graduate School, P.O. Box 1080, Wolfeboro Falls, NH 03896. Telephone: (603) 569-8648. Fax: (603) 569-4052. E-Mail: berne@berne.edu Web site: www.berne.edu.

GENERAL INTEREST

HOME TYPISTS, PC users needed. \$45,000 income potential. Call: (800) 513-4343, Extension B-20061.

SERVICES

EROTIC, INTELLIGENT, IMAGINATIVE telephone conversations. Personal and discreet fee-based service. Please inquire: (617) 661-3849.

SINGLE BOOKLOVERS gets unattached readers acquainted. Nationwide, Box 117, Gradyville, PA 19039. (800) 773-3437. www.singlebooklovers.com.

NEVER TOO LATE—Friendship, love for people over forty. (800) NTL-4LUV. www.ioa.com/home/ntl Change your life!

FOR ADVERTISING INFORMATION WRITE:
P.O. Box 1510, Clearwater, FL 33757

OR CALL:
800-237-9851

ingredients of a bar of soap." The mundane and the terrible merged in Sara-jevo. Mr. Mehmedinović takes the reader there.

Jack Yeats

by Bruce Arnold.
Yale, 428 pages, \$45.00.

John Butler Yeats (feckless son of intellectual Irish gentry) and Susan Pollexfen (daughter of a prosperous Irish businessman) had four surviving children: Willie (William), Lily (Susan), Lolly (Elizabeth), and Jack (John). Jack became an artist, like his father. Unlike his father, he made a sound living, first as a successful illustrator, eventually as the revered grand old man of twentieth-century Irish painters. Mr. Arnold's biography gives proper attention to Yeats's art, but covers many other matters as well. Yeats lived for years in Devon with his English wife. He became a friend of John Masefield, with whom he shared an enthusiasm for ballads, pirates, and model boats that were launched to heroic disaster on a Devonshire river. He became a friend of the playwright John Millington Synge, when the two traveled in the west of Ireland as writer and illustrator of pieces on the area for the *Manchester Guardian*. He came to know, and admire, the painter Oskar Kokoschka, whose slashing style had some influence on his own late brushwork. The Yeats family as a whole—the poet, the painter, and their two energetic sisters—was influential in all aspects of the Irish renaissance of the early twentieth century, a fact that gives Mr. Arnold a wonderful, and wonderfully quotable, cast of characters for this splendid, well-illustrated biography. If the book has a defect, it is the shortage of examples from Jack Yeats's written work. Yes, he did that, too.

One Man's Chorus

by Anthony Burgess.
Carroll & Graf, 380 pages,
\$26.00.

Burgess, whose essays on writers, composers, historical events, and his own idiosyncratic notions make up this collection, did not fancy the position of critic. He saw himself as a fiction writer who had vainly wished to be a composer, and a critic only for want of a better way to earn ready cash. But he was nev-

er a hack. The occasional pieces written, presumably, to butter daily bread display the same taste, wit, learning, and elegance of style that distinguish Burgess's novels, and make delightful reading.

Nordic Landscape Painting in the Nineteenth Century

by Torsten Gunnarsson,
translated by Nancy Adler.
Yale, 303 pages, \$65.00.

Mr. Gunnarsson provides more than a catalogue of painters and their lives. He examines the ideas and political situations that led, after the Napoleonic Wars, to the realization among Scandinavian artists that fjords and fir trees are as paintable as Roman ruins, and silvery northern mist as interesting as golden Italian sunlight. The book is lavishly illustrated with excellent, often striking works—most of them located in Scandinavian museums. Those painters found an appreciative audience on their home ground.

Harlequin on the Moon: Commedia dell'Arte and the Visual Arts

by Lynne Lawner.
Abrams, 208 pages, \$60.00.

Commedia dell'Arte originated (probably) in sixteenth-century Italy, and has been around ever since. It has added characters and changed names with changing countries, but its basic pattern runs through painting, circus, all forms of theater, and on into cinema. It will probably reach outer space in time. The characters have become archetypes; their antics are infinitely variable, and their relationships fluid enough to give artists the leeway to convert them into sad or merry symbols at will. Ms. Lawner's history of the genre makes a pretty, amusing book that is also informative.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

Recent books by Atlantic authors:

Earth Odyssey: Around the World in Search of Our Environmental Future by Mark Hertsgaard. Broadway Books, 352 pages, \$26.00. A portion of this book first appeared as "Our Real China Problem," in the November, 1997, *Atlantic*.



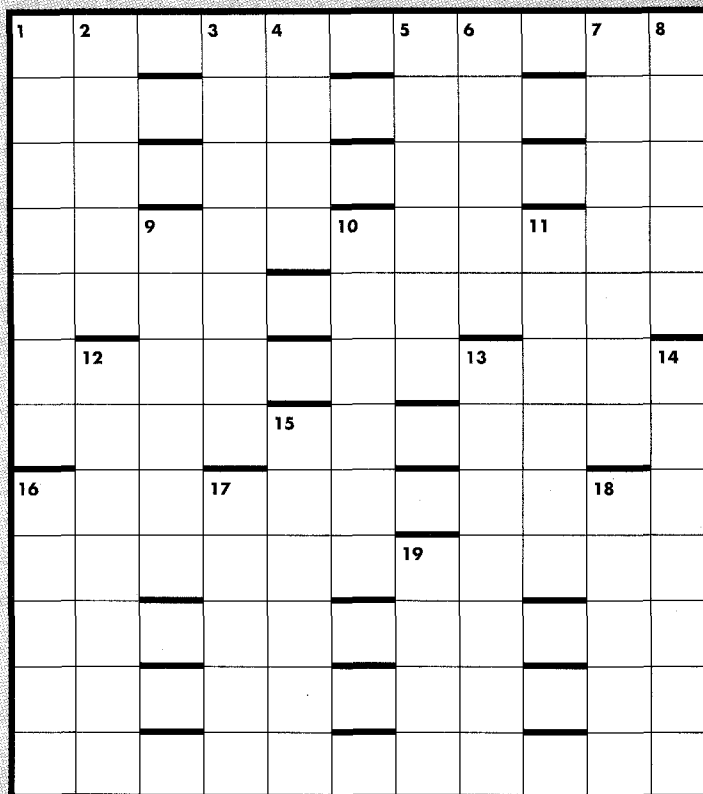
THE PUZZLER

by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon

Cross-Training

As every fitness freak knows, a good cross-training program involves both diet and exercise. Accordingly, some of this puzzle's Across entries undergo a dietary restriction, while some Down entries take part in certain exercises. Clues for "dieting" Acrosses consist of two definitions, one for the "before" version of the answer (whose length is given) and one for the "after" version (which appears in the diagram); either definition may come first. The diet is spelled out by the Acrosses' losses in the order in which they occur. Across clues are given in proper order, although the bars marking their answers' starting and ending points are not shown. (If the bars were shown, their pattern would be the same after rotating the grid 180 degrees.) Exercise instructions intersect themselves as otherwise unclued Across entries, and apply to the Down entries that cross them. Locations of all Down entries are given normally. Clue answers include nine capitalized words, counting both "before" and "after" Acrosses. Have a good workout!

The solution to last month's Puzzler appears on page 100.



Across

- a. Health clubs miss modernized muscular movements (6)
- b. Check part of a wine glass (4)
- c. Rebuke ancient king repeatedly (3-3)
- d. In old Rome, a general lack of muscle tone (6)
- e. Cast doing some cobbler's work (6)
- f. Orange truck in descent (6)
- g. Examine small receptacle (4)
- h. Quartet member involved in retrospective collection (5)
- i. Darkly smears Russian emperors (5)
- j. Broken on the same side together (6)
- k. Covers with black darts (6)
- l. Carefully studies Lester Young's nickname (5)
- m. Ultimately seek eccentric English guy's name in Norway (5)
- n. Get down as if to scrub boat's bottom (5)

- o. Nothing factual about Democrat's trial (6)
- p. Dodge commercial in England (6)
- q. The blue woman in the Bible (6)
- r. Take in excessively choppy seas in Black Sea port (6)
- s. Fitting match (4)
- t. My staff, for the most part, is beyond human understanding (6)

Down

- 1. Street with place on both sides for trees (7)
- 2. Beat some veggies (5)
- 3. Gifts from Al put in shelters (7)
- 4. Attacks hams (4)
- 5. Rare gold netted in reckless raid (6)
- 6. Be sparing with second color (5)
- 7. Country instrument played by Tiny Tim when taking shower (7)
- 8. Many exotic southern birds (5)
- 9. Lieutenant returned wearing beard with finesse (6)
- 10. Canadian tribe maintaining mostly old form of French (6)
- 11. Show missing average for Hall of Fame hitter (6)
- 12. Tear madly around Swiss canton and Tuscany of old (7)
- 13. Quiet about something happening after six (7)
- 14. Without any resistance, secretary shot marble (4-3)
- 15. Head of studio listens to cuts (6)
- 16. Dance receiving excellent introduction (5)
- 17. Cries of alarm from the rear exit—finally, some shooting (5)
- 18. Rings covering front of swim trunks (5)
- 19. Young man seen with unknown woman (4)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.

WORD COURT

by Barbara Wallraff

My secretary and I are in disagreement over the use of the word *adversarial*. My perspective is that the correct transformation of the noun *adversary* into an adjective is to form *adversative* and not *adversarial*. I note that only *adversative* is found in most dictionaries, but both words are found in most computer spell-checking functions, and *adversarial* has found its way into widespread use. My secretary's perspective is that word selection should be based on efficient communication skills, even if the word is grammatically suspect. I disagree. Which is the correct word?

Andrew Käser
Portland, Oreg.



Even two thirds of the way through the twentieth century *adversarial* was nowhere to be found in dictionaries; the earliest citation for it in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is dated 1970. But now, judging from recent U.S. newspaper articles in the Nexis database, it is used hundreds of times as often as *adversative*. (In fact, these days *adversative* seems to come up almost exclusively in stories about southern military academies. The *Augusta* [Georgia] *Chronicle*, for example, recently mentioned "the *adversative* training and Spartan living conditions at The Citadel.") This would probably not be the case if everybody literate still read Latin, for we'd all be familiar with the Latin form *adversativus*; and *adversarial*, though its *-ial* ending also derives from Latin, would strike us as a chimerical creature.

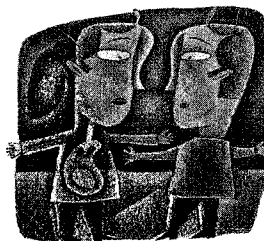
Hardly anyone does read Latin anymore, however, and the chimeras swooping through our language are legion—not only such well-domesticated ones as *bureaucracy*, *coastal*, *pacifist*, and *speedometer* (about all of which H. W. Fowler sputtered a bit, calling them "hy-

brid derivatives") but also younger, wilder ones such as *Iran-contra-gate* and the *Teflon President*, *RJ-11 jacks* and *R2D2*, and *ibuprofen* and *Advil* and *Motrin*—these last being an odd-looking trio of synonyms if ever there was one. It's not grammar that *adversarial* is assailing but purity of etymology, and our language is so polyglot generally that I can't summon up much indignation about the fact that *adversative* has—let's face it—lost out to *adversarial*.

Could you discuss the term transparent? My impression is that it is used with two opposite meanings. Among engineers and other technical types it seems to mean that the inner workings of something are invisible to the user, whereas among the politically inclined it seems to mean that the inner workings are fully visible to the public. For example, in *Envisioning Information*, Edward R. Tufte used the word as a synonym for "undetectable" when he wrote, "By giving the focus over to data rather than data-containers, these design strategies are transparent and self-effacing in character. Designs so good that they are invisible." But in *The Economist* the word meant "fully visible": "The best solution [to campaign finance scandals] is not to restrict political donations or spending, but to make them transparent. Every penny a party receives should be made public and its source named."

Frances Moore
Loveland, Colo.

Come to think of it, *clear* has the same peculiarity: "Those sliding glass doors are so *clear* that I walked right into one—it was invisible!" "What you mean is perfectly *clear* to everyone—it's obvious!" The pos-



sible ambiguity is worth keeping in mind when using either word in a context where it won't be, well, clear.

Everywhere I look, I see the following and wonder if it can be correct: "I was so excited about him having that job," "I wonder what he thought of us going," "I appreciate you doing that."

Judith L. Anderson
Scarborough, Maine

Are we excited about *him* or about his having the job? Words ending in *-ing* are either gerunds, which function as nouns, or present participles, which can modify nouns. The trick with sentences like your examples is to decide which of these a given *-ing* word ought to be. Surely in this case we're excited about the *having* of the job and therefore that word should be a gerund and the pronoun should be a modifier for it—that is, not *him* but the possessive *his*.

Similar-looking instances can be conceptually different. In "I was so excited to see *him* working again," the point is less that we're excited to see the *working* than that we're excited to see *him* in that situation. Your second and third examples could be on this pattern—or perhaps they're on the other one. They are awkward as is, though, aren't they? Which brings us to the general rule: treat the *-ing* word as a gerund and make the other noun possessive unless there's a reason to think and do otherwise.



Have you had a language dispute that you would like this column to resolve? Write to Word Court in care of *The Atlantic Monthly*, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or send E-mail to MsGrammar@TheAtlantic.com. All letters become the property of Word Court.

*When the king, the prince,
or the maharaja disappears,
this is the first place
they look.*

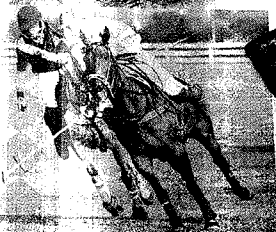
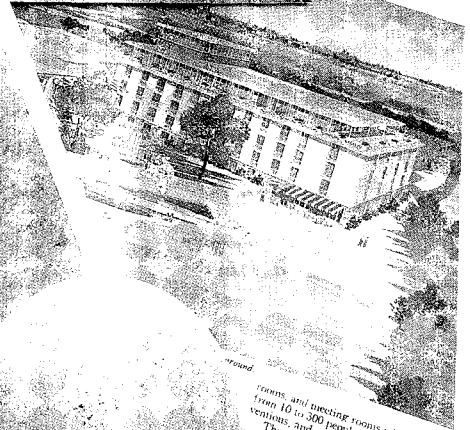


Photo by Karen Hartman



Where would you go to get away from it all? If you were a foreign dignitary or the head of state, chances are you would come to Oak Brook. For years, the world's most prominent personalities have come here to disappear. And who can blame them? From the beginning, Oak Brook was designed to provide an enclave of upscale leisure secluded in the heart of America. From world class polo matches to elite grand balls. To this day, The Drake Oak Brook reflects the grandeur and refinement that has drawn the world's key figures here for years. And now, The Drake Oak Brook has been renovated to an even higher standard of hospitality. Elegantly appointed guestrooms, a new spa and fitness center with indoor and outdoor pools, and the exclusive Chamberley Club with complimentary breakfast, afternoon snacks and evening cocktails. All designed to treat you like royalty. So disappear into the rich hospitality you'll find at all Chamberley Hotels. And in the process, find yourself again. Become a part of our history.



The
DRAKE
Oak Brook
A Chamberley Hotel

Call your travel professional or Chamberley Hotels (800) 555-8000 www.chamberleyhotels.com

ABINGDON • ATLANTA ('99) • BERMUDA ('99) • LOUISVILLE
NEW YORK • OAK BROOK (CHICAGO) • SAN ANTONIO



Peace and quiet

The dreaded NVH — Noise, Vibration and Harshness. It can make driving to the store seem like a trip
in a car

to the moon. That's why Toyota goes to such extremes to make Avalon so quiet. Like asphalt-sheet insulation,
is not rocket science.

gas-charged struts and a liquid-filled engine mount. Space-age engineering for down-to-earth comfort.

It's tougher.



Avalon

TOYOTA | everyday

©1998 Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc. Buckle Up! Do it for those who love you. 1-800-GO-TOYOTA ♦ www.toyota.com

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED